

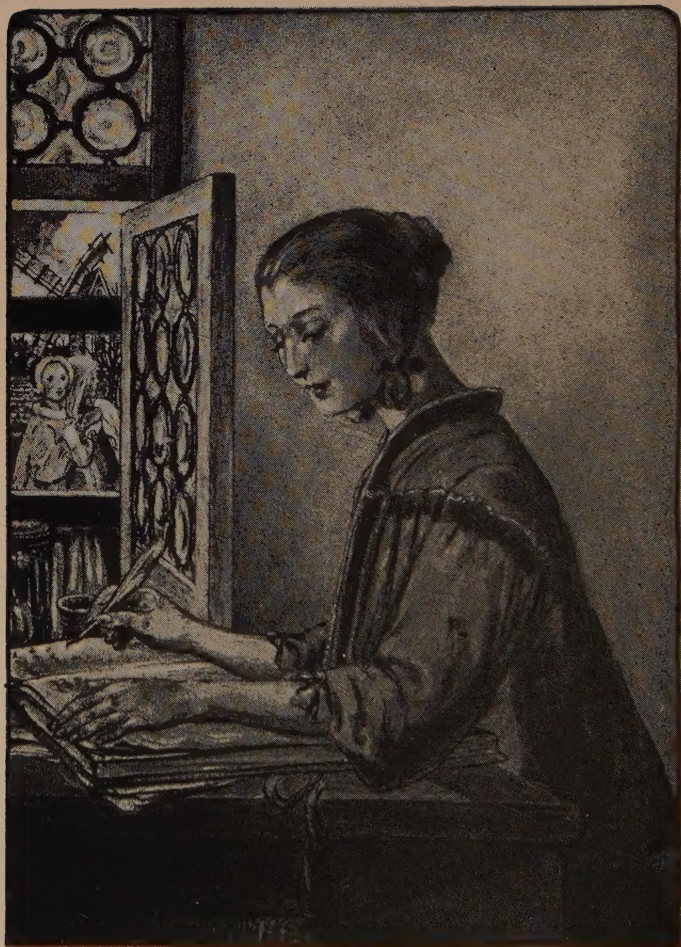
THE FLOWER OF FORTUNE



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THE
FLOWER OF FORTUNE



Already she had opened a great ledger

THE FLOWER OF FORTUNE

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CHAPTER I

IN WHICH WE MEET A LADY

IT was a cheerful, sunny day, and her house was in perfect order; yet Judith looked anxious as she passed quickly from the store (closed to customers since her father's untimely death), through the office, the fore-room, and the kitchen down into the cellar, then up quickly to the chambers on the second floor and above them to the garret and cockloft. No speck of dust was to be found, no piece of metal but shone as metal should.

Coming back to the fore-room she went to the door of the great chamber; but here, out of respect to the sheen of the floor which Metje had polished with loving care, she paused at the threshold. She knew well that all was as it should be, yet so much hung on the impression she would make

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upon her expected visitors that she could not control her anxiety.

The house presented a checkered brick gable-end to the street after the Dutch fashion, an iron *anker* with date of erection ornamenting it. The length of the building lay along the flower-gardens; thus when it stormed the drippings or drifts from the high roof were cast off harmlessly instead of descending on the passers-by, as was the case with the English designed houses.

The day was so unseasonably warm as to resemble spring rather than winter. Almost it seemed the Judas-tree must have budded, and Metje had thrown open some of the windows to let in the fresh breeze. Through these now came a clamor of voices that quickly drew Judith to the front door.

There was indeed a rabble in the roadway, a rabble of children, circling about something in their midst with shrill shouts.

Judith ran quickly to her gate, expecting that they were baiting some animal from the woods, as happened all too frequently. Instead, to her surprise, she found that a child of the better class was their victim; and their effort was to keep her

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from seeking safety within the gate, which Judith, running down the path, threw open just as the controversy had reached this height. She was entirely ignorant of the merits of the dispute, but she recognized gentle Nan Homan set on by many, foremost among whom was a lad who had earned the name of bully throughout the town, and instinctively she threw herself upon the weaker side.

"Shame on you, big Jan Bloemers!" she cried, "to so misuse a little maid. Get you gone to your home!"

"And who are you to give me orders?" Bloemers blustered. "You think yourself very grand because your father left you your own mistress, which my father says was most like a clever trick to befool his credi—"

Smack! Judith brought her fan about his ears with such vigor that the sandle-wood sticks were shattered.

"Now what means this brawling in the public highway?" cried the shrill voice of an elderly gentleman, as he rounded the corner accompanied by several companions of less years but equal dignity. "Tut! Tut! This will never do."

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“Run! ’T is Mijnhere van Bursum,” was whispered from one to another of the young rowdies; and, with a clatter of wooden shoes on the cobbles, they all made off save Jan Bloemers, on whose shoulder one of the gentlemen had laid an unwelcome hand.

“Nay,” he said sternly, “we saw you punished. We wish now to know if the blows you received were merited.”

Indeed it was Judith who stood before these gentlemen a picture of guilt. It was of such vast importance that she should impress them with her age, her dignity, and above all her power of self-government that her heart seemed like to drop out of her breast at the thought that they had come upon her in what must have looked to them naught better than a rough-and-tumble quarrel. For the moment she was at loss for words to defend herself against their suspicions.

Help came to her from an unexpected source for, like most bullies, Jan Bloemers was a coward.

“Let go my *paltrok*,” he whined. “Do ye think my father is made of money that ye tear my clothes from off my back? I’ve done no hurt and I know not why the *meisje* took such a clip at me.”

IN WHICH WE MEET A LADY

"The lad is lying," declared one of the gentlemen, and Judith took heart.

"He and his companions had set upon this little maid," she faltered. "Even within the house I heard them shouting at her. I had no thought it was a child they were baiting. I ran out, hoping to beg or buy from them some miserable wildling, a fox cub, perchance, or a squirrel, and I found the little girl sore beset."

"Then it was in her defense that you beat the lad?"

"Nay," Judith reddened as she made the admission, "he turned on me to slander another. 'T was then I lost my patience and broke my fan about his ears. I confess my fault."

The gentlemen exchanged glances, and, making an effort to regain her self-possession, Judith begged them to enter.

"And you too, Nan," she added; whispering quickly, "run to Metje at the back. She will give you your piece and later I will walk home with you."

Greatly relieved by this promise, the little maid skipped off and the gentleman followed Judith up the bricked path.

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"I bid you welcome at my threshold, *mijne heren*," Judith said gravely, and her visitors followed her into the *voorhuis*, which in this, as in the majority of Dutch houses, was hall, living-room and dining-room combined.

Most of them knew of old the leather chairs studded with brass nails, the fine painted *kas*, the Turkey carpet on the table, the good Dutch pictures, and the racks for silver and pewter on the walls. These missed the master's bed with its handsome red say hangings, which had long been furnishings of the fore-room as was customary in New Amsterdam. Judith had had this removed, and in its place she had set a chest of drawers of South walnut, with a press for napkins atop.

"But where is the lad?" The Here van Bursum turned ponderously to Mr. Pierce, his captor, who shrugged his shoulders.

"He escaped me," he answered. "Like an eel he twisted out of my grasp as we passed through the gate. He is no new offender, I'll warrant. He took good care that I should not be left with cap or coat for his parents to redeem."

"This is not the Sabbath," Hendrick Breesteede

IN WHICH WE MEET A LADY

sniffed, ever ready to take the opposite side to an Englishman.

“None the less,” Mr. Pierce told him stiffly, “had the boy not snatched his cap from my hand, I should have made it my business to take it to his parents. The law might not exact two shillings’ fine as it would had he been brawling in church time, but I make sure that his father would have dealt with him.”

“Now, now!” Here van Bursum spoke softly, it being ever his way to pour oil on troubled waters, “he’s gone, and perchance ’t is better so. There is no need to stir up ill feeling. Complaints of a man’s son hurt his pride the more an they are warranted. The little maid is not injured, and ’tis likely the lad offended unconsciously in some rough jest. All’s well that ends well. We’ve all been boys ourselves, so let’s to business.”

“*Mijne heren,*” Judith interposed in tones that she tried to keep from trembling, “I regret that your reception hath been so lacking in the ceremony that is your due. You are left standing in the *voorhuis* when the great chamber is ready

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to welcome you. Will you not enter and be seated?"

"Nay, child," old Here van Bursum spoke kindly, "I stood upon the threshold, but as none of us had soft-walkers I thought that we would not spoil your handiwork. We are very well where we are."

"Then I pray you draw up to the table here. It is, I know, in your minds and in your power to determine whether my father's will is to be respected in its entirety or whether I am to have set over me certain governors."

Judith seated herself naturally at the head of the table, and her visitors ranged themselves on either hand with the careful observance of precedence upon which they prided themselves. Young Thomas Lane alone still stood, hat in hand.

"I am but a messenger. The governor sent for my father post-haste," the lad explained as he felt all eyes upon him. "He bade me give you greeting and his regrets that his Excellency commanded his presence just as he picked up his staff to set out. However, I am to say that his decision in this matter is not susceptible of change.

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He holds that till a child is of age, its father is entitled to order its life. Now, having fulfilled my errand, I ask your leave to go."

"As Master Lane cannot be here himself it is proper that he should have a representative," fat Hendrick Breesteede said pompously. "Take that chair, boy." He pointed to the foot of the table.

Nothing loth, Tom Lane accepted the situation. His eighteen years cried out against that insulting word "boy"; but he irreverently wondered what these "old *fantods*" were going to do with this nice girl, and it would make a wonderful tale to tell his cronies that he had sat in such a distinguished assemblage; and accordingly he took the chair indicated and looked up the long table at Judith.

On her right sat the Here van Bursum, small and neat, a moneyed man, of great weight in the city, though little would one have thought it from his meek manner, forever trying to reconcile this with that.

On her left was Peter Morton, a dyspeptic Englishman, who, liking neither the country nor its ways was tied to it by his possessions. The

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corners of his mouth were dragged at by his discontent till a child could read his disposition there.

Hendrick Breesteede, Dutch as his name, sat next him. Large-jowled, full-paunched, he looked like a pudding taken from the mold before it was quite set. The top of his head was smaller than his neck, his shoulders than his hips; but his face despite his flabby flesh, was not weak, only entirely selfish.

Edward Pierce, the other Englishman, was opposite him. He was quick in action as in thought. Sharp of feature but not ill-natured. A man with his way to make, but of whom it was already said success was sure.

What side would each of these men take and how would it affect this maid, who possessed a strange, vivid personality that set her apart from any Dutch girl Tom had seen before?

He settled in his place of no importance, well content to be there and watch the drama unfold.

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH WE HEAR NEWS OF THE GREAT MOGUL

“THE question is, then, whether it is the policy of the province to permit that its rightful authority over an orphan be removed out of its hands.” Mr. Pierce set out the case for consideration.

Before any one else could speak his mind on the matter, Judith was on her feet. She had gone over and over in her thoughts what she must say, memorizing each sentence so that nothing should be forgotten.

“Excellencies,” she curtsied profoundly to the company ere she began, in tones that trembled ever so slightly, “I have no one to speak for me, therefore must I take upon myself the unmaidenly task of defending my own rights. The question is not precisely as the honorable gentleman hath set it forth. I do not deny the just authority of the state. I shall endeavor to do

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my duty as a citizen in all ways that a maiden may.

"The whole question, as I see it, is shall a dutiful child be allowed to carry out her honored father's last commands? Belike I might ask you, Here van Bursum, to read the clause in my father's will that sets these commands upon me."

"I think that, by rights, I should read the whole will," Hendrick Breesteede suggested importantly. "I've had a copy of it made for that purpose."

"I was about to suggest it," Here van Bursum said suavely. "My voice grows hoarse too quickly for public speaking."

Here Breesteede took a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles from his pocket, rubbed them with his figured calico handkerchief, and settled them on his snub nose; then he cleared his throat and began:

"'In the name of God, Amen.'"

"Amen," all those around the table repeated devoutly, and Breesteede looked at them over the tops of his glasses as if challenging them to interrupt again. Then, once more settling the spectacles firmly, he went on:

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“I, Nicolaes Van Taarl, of New Yorke, widower, being sorely stricken in health but sound and perfect in mind, do ordain that the funeralls of my body shall be only such as shall become a Christian.

“To my daughter and only child, Judith Van Taarl, I leave all my estate of whatsoever kind, entrusting to her the payment of funnerall charges, debts and necessary disbursements, and expressly commanding that the Lords Orphan Masters be excluded from all management of my properties and be not allowed to meddle in any way with the government of my aforesaid child and universal heir, Judith Van Taarl.

“I make Judith Van Taarl sole executor of this, my last will.

“Dated, September 2nd, 1698.

“Witnesses:

[Signed] “‘NICOLAES VAN TAARL’”

“‘RIP VAN WYCK

“‘CORNELIS ROBERTS

“‘TEUNIS TAMS’”

“’T is a most uncompromising document,” said Peter Morton fretfully.

“Truly it offers small basis for an accommo-

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dation," sighed Here van Bursum, ever hopeful of effecting a settlement.

"It might be proper enough were the young miss a lad, who had already shared his father's business cares," Edward Pierce suggested, "but such responsibility is too great for a girl of—How old are you?" he asked Judith abruptly.

"I'm in my sixteenth year, sir," she answered promptly.

"Your birthday was when?" he asked, not to be put off.

"It is to-day, sir," she answered with the best grace she could, and at the foot of the table Tom Lane hid a smile.

"She's but a child. I feel that she should not be trusted with the management of such great possessions," Morton fumed, looking around him at the evidences of riches on every side.

"I have had the charge of this house and all within it for eight years, ever since my aunt married and returned to the Fatherland. Think you aught hath suffered under that management?" Judith was serenely conscious that Metje's housewifery left little to be desired, and on another occasion would have been the first to proclaim to

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whom most of the credit for the perfect order was due.

"Why not request your aunt to come back and live with you?" Here van Bursum put the tips of his fingers together and leaned toward her expectantly, confident that he had hit upon a most happy expedient. "Then under your uncle's supervision we could put the management of your affairs."

"She is not my aunt by blood but my father's stepsister. Had he wished her and her husband to have charge over me, he would have written that in his will," Judith returned firmly. "He liked not my aunt's husband, nor do I. I would prefer the Lords Orphan Masters to their guidance."

"Then why not agree to be placed in their charge?" Peter Morton suggested. "You are causing much anxiety by refusing to comply with what is assuredly a wise provision to protect children too young to undertake the ordering of their own estates."

"But I am not too young!" Judith exclaimed. "Have I not said that I have turned fifteen? Many girls of that age are wedded, and then they

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are not told they are too young to manage their establishments."

"Nor are they, under the wise guidance of their husbands," chuckled Hendrick Breesteede.

"Are you perchance betrothed?" Here van Bursum purred. "That would indeed solve many problems."

"But I am not betrothed," Judith flushed hotly, "nor like to be. I am too young for marriage—"

For the moment she had lost track of her argument and had returned in her mind to an interview with her father when she had, for the only time in her life, refused to do his will.

"Too young for marriage but not too young to claim the privileges of *mevrouwen*." Breesteede continued to chuckle, and again Judith flushed hotly. She did not like to be made a mock of before this company, and an answer came quickly to her lips.

"Women have been known to hold their own with men. We have had female traders among the Indians. There was Margaret Hardenbroeck who died leaving her husband, Frederick Flipse, a rich man. She sailed in her own ships and bought

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and traded in her own name, and no man could get the better of her."

Now this was an unwise retort, because Vrouw Flipse had, on one notorious occasion, so overreached Here Breesteede as to make the transaction a jest even after the lapse of years; and to turn the laugh against a man is no way to gain his friendship.

Judith knew that Mr. Lane's vote was in her favor; she was soon to learn that she had lost Hendrick Breesteede's.

"Do you then plan to carry on your father's business?" Master Pierce asked.

"*She* carry on a great business!" Breesteede puffed scornfully, before the girl had a chance to open her lips. "Do not encourage her in such lofty imaginings. Her childish prattle should tell you that her ambitions are so fired by this fond will of her father's that she holdeth herself equal to ruling the whole province. The Lords Orphan Masters must have charge over her."

"Here Breesteede!" Judith was about to burst out with another hot answer, but she took thought in time. She had counted upon opposition, and

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to win against it she must not let it anger her.

"You spoke?" hinted Breesteede.

"It was my wish to assure you that I had no such plan as you suggested," she said meekly. "With your approval, Excellencies, I would like to sell the contents of the shop at public vendue."

"Or you might sell the whole house and shop to a trader. The good-will of the Sign of the Barrow and Bale is worth something," Master Pierce reminded her, practically.

"I have no authority to sell the house," Judith answered, surprised. "I thought that was well known. It was strictly entailed by my mother's father on her children and their posterity."

"Complication on complication," Peter Morton fussed. "I saw us well rid of all troubles, with your goods turned into money and you put to board with the family of some godly man, the minister of your own faith for choice."

"You will be easily rid of me, Master Morton," Judith said pleadingly. "You need but agree to allow me to assume the responsibility of my own welfare, as my father wished."

"Yes, yes, my child," Here van Bursum told her soothingly, "yet if, perchance, thereafter you



"I myself saw the girl lay her fan about that tail's ears"

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should fall into the hands of designing men who robbed you of your wealth, which one of us could feel free of blame?"

"If I agree to place my moneys in your care and to go into no business venture without your consent, will you allow the will to stand?"

"I can see no objection to that," Here van Bursum began, after some consideration.

"I do!" Breesteede interposed stubbornly. "Such a maid, impetuous, hot-tempered, and self-willed, should be under the wise restraint of the Lords Orphan Masters, as I said before."

"Dear, dear!" Peter Morton mourned, "I greatly fear that you are right. I myself saw the girl lay her fan about that lad's ears."

"For good reason," Edward Pierce interrupted. "It is not for *that* I am against removing her from all authority. She is too young to live alone, with none but an underling for a companion. What would she do in her courting days?"

"Indeed, indeed, Master Pierce," Judith twisted her hands together in her eagerness, "I'll have no lovers. I'll promise you there shall be no courting. My mind is full of other matters of true importance."

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"It is easy to forswear lovers who do not exist"—Master Pierce with difficulty concealed a kindly smile,—“but at seventeen, say, when they come thronging, what would there be to keep you to your word if our authority were removed?”

“My honor,” said Judith simply.

“Nay, nay!” Here van Bursum interposed, “it is no part of the policy of the colony to lay such irksome restraints upon its orphans.”

“Of late years,” Breesteede spoke pompously, “since New Amsterdam is no more, New Yorke has become the haunt of adventurers from all lands—”

“The English did not invent the Madagascar trade,” Pierce rejoined tartly, the animosity between the two races ever ready to leap to the surface. “The Strand swarmed with pirates when we came here.”

“Gentlemen! Gentlemen!” Here van Bursum implored, “we ’re here to discuss the government of Judith Van Taarl, not of the province.”

“None the less,” Peter Morton said specifically, “Here Breesteede is right to point out the perils to one of so impetuous a temperament. This young

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woman needeth a firm hand to guide her past more dangers than one."

"'T is exactly what I said." Here Breesteede puffed out his fat cheeks approvingly. "Failing that, the Lords Orphan Masters must act. There is no precedent for such an extraordinary will."

Several heads were nodding in agreement to this last statement when Tom Lane at the foot of the table spoke for the first time since he had taken his place there.

"I crave your indulgence, gentlemen," he said respectfully, "but as I am here in my father's place, I take it I may speak if I but quote his words."

"Of a surety," Here van Bursum replied. "There can be no harm in that." He glanced from one to the other of his colleagues, who signified assent, grudging or willing as their natures dictated.

"Then," said young Lane, "that is just what there is—a precedent."

"A precedent for this unprecedented will?" Hendrick Breesteede stuttered. "What mean you?"

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"Exactly that," Tom told them gravely. "The date is 1678. I found the record of it for my father. It is the joint will of Stoeffel and Heeltie Abeel and is very similar in wording to Here Van Taarl's will. Here is a copy of it I made. It confirmed my father in his decision that the terms of this will must be complied with."

"And were the Abeel children left free of the restraints of the Lords Orphan Masters?" asked Here van Bursum, after each man in turn had pored over the paper.

"So my father was assured," young Lane answered.

"Then," said Peter Morton, complainingly, "we have been put to needless trouble, and I can see no reason for the appointment of this committee."

"Nor I," sputtered Breesteede, bringing a fat, moist fist down on the table. "A precedent is a precedent. The matter is settled."

"A precedent need not be followed if it is better for this orphan that it be ignored," Mr. Pierce pointed out gravely, but this brought a storm of protest from his colleagues; even gentle Here van

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Bursum now considered the matter settled out of their hands, and they all rose to go.

Judith it was who stayed them.

"I pray you, Excellencies, that you will not leave my roof without partaking of my hospitality," she said. "I will bring the trays, which are already prepared, if you will excuse my absence for a moment."

"Pray allow me to carry a tray for you," Tom Lane suggested gravely, and as gravely Judith accepted his offer. It was not till the kitchen door closed behind them that she turned to him with anxious eyes, while Metje hastened to brew both tea and saffron.

"It was kind of you to want to help me; but what will happen when they find out there is no such will?" she asked.

"They won't find that out," Tom answered, taking up a heavily laden tray, "because there is."

"I saw you writing it at the table," Judith challenged him, as she too seized on a tray.

"Well, so I did—from memory. It would have taken too much explaining to make them understand that my father pocketed the copy I made for

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him." Tom led the way back to the *voorhuis* and placed his tray safely on the table, Judith following at his heels, relieved in her mind that there really was a precedent to strengthen her contention, yet a little disappointed withal, she knew not why.

The young housewife had contrived to lay a very acceptable refreshment before her guests.

In addition to the saffron which had been brewed to accompany the China tea, Hollands gin and West India rum were brought out of the *kas* and placed on the table with metheglin, *oblies*, sugar biscuits, roasted almonds, and strange, netted jars of candied ginger.

The gentlemen set to with gusto, and even Breesteede, the most opposed among them to giving her her liberty, felt more kindly disposed toward his hostess after his sixth cup of tea and saffron.

"'T is fine tea you have brewed," he said, smacking his lips ere he wiped them on the linen napkin provided for him. "I'll wager it came in your father's own ship, the *Great Mogul*."

"It did," Judith told him. "It is packed in chests of waxed wood, each lined with silvered

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paper and sealed within an outer case of lead. When this is gone no more such tea will I be able to offer your Excellencies."

"Surely you can send for more on the next voyage of the *Great Mogul*?" Here van Bursum suggested. "It would be too bad that your friends should be deprived of such a satisfaction."

"Did you not know," Judith tried to make her voice sound indifferent, "that the *Great Mogul* was lost nine months gone or more?"

There was a moment's stillness in the room, for the news she gave, them, was of a great disaster.

"How mean you lost?" Peter Morton inquired petulantly. "Did the *Mogul* founder in a storm, or was she cast away? Was there no salvage?"

"No," said Judith, "there was no salvage. She was taken by buccaneers."

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH THE LADY HATH THE BIRTHDAY GIFT SHE COVETS

A HEAVY silence greeted this announcement. Of all those present young Tom Lane was the most thrilled by it, for seizure of ships by buccaneers was not so usual a happening in 1699 as it had been a few years earlier, or as it was to be again; while the older men had lived in the palmy days of the Madagascar trade when all New York had fattened and grown rich on the exchange of goods with freebooters.

The commissioning of privateers by the English Government to prey upon and destroy enemy shipping had drawn scores of heavily armed, swift-sailing combatants from colonial ports. Once at sea the majority of these plundered indiscriminately, without regard to what flag their victim flew, and sold their booty openly in the markets of New Yorke.

Under Governor Fletcher this was quite safe.

LADY HATH GIFT SHE COVETS

Many of the most notorious pirates boasted the possession of his commission and swaggered openly on the city's streets, armed with jeweled swords and daggers and pearl-handled pistols.

But it was not in direct ownership of privateers, real or pretended, that the New Yorke merchants were most deeply involved. They had devised a safer plan. This was to load a ship for Madagascar with Jamaica rum, gunpowder, and Madeira wines, which the pirates stood ready to buy at triple their cost. From the sea-rovers they took East India goods of all sorts, camphor from Borneo, coffee from Java, precious stones and cinnamon from Ceylon, shawls from Bengal, ebony and sandalwood, silks and embroideries from China, diamonds from the mines of Golconda itself, besides gold, gloves, and other booty; while between the bales were cloves and nutmegs ying loose so that you might wade in them to your knees and, if the wind set right, could smell the ships as they came up the bay. Another profit was reaped on this exchange, so that one voyage might net a vessel fifty thousand pounds or more, and there was no risk from pirates, as the corsairs did not molest those who traded with them and

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offered them their best means of returning to their homes.

Small wonder that Arab gold and Portuguese half-jos were more numerous than English guineas, and that Lord Bellomont, who was sent to replace Governor Fletcher, had met with opposition to his attempts to regulate this illegal traffic.

On hearing Judith's news it is likely that every man at that table except young Lane was asking himself if the old days were coming back when, if one did not wish to be shorn, it was safer to be a wolf.

Tom Lane, the exception, was boy enough to long for the pirate tale, caring nothing for what it might portend. Wholly forgetting the august company, and leaning well across the table among the tea-cups, he cried excitedly:

"What happened? I pray you tell the story. Was she taken off the Malabar coast or the West Indies? Did they scuttle her? Were the crew made to walk the plank? How had you the news? And who was the pirate captain?"

"Softly, softly," said Here van Bursum, "the *Juffer* will be drowned in such a rush of words.

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Let her give us the history in her own way and at her ease."

"Indeed there is naught more for me to tell," Judith said calmly. "My father told me by word of mouth exactly what I have recounted to you."

"But, my child," Here van Bursum spoke compassionately, "such a loss is enough to cripple the richest."

Nods went around the table. It was evident that all of the men felt that here was a fact which materially altered the position of the young girl.

"My father was a great merchant with shares in many ventures," she returned, unperturbed. "Is it not possible that others divided this loss with him? I cannot believe he would n't have told me if the matter were so serious as you seem to fear. Even the hen-wife puts not all her eggs in one basket."

"To be sure! To be sure!" Here van Bursum murmured with a sigh of relief. "Doubtless he carried cargo for many. Perchance even he was not sole owner of the ship."

"Your father's papers should make all that

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clear," Peter Morton fussed. "It would be well if we examined them for you."

"If any difficulties arise, anything that passeth the female comprehension, I shall thankfully avail myself of your kind help," Judith said, "but, an I can, I wish to prove myself worthy of my father's reliance on me and manage my affairs myself."

"'T is an overweening ambition for a female," Breesteede grunted sourly.

"'T is at least a laudable one," said Edward Pierce kindly, "and I wish you all success."

"And I too; though I know not nor can divine what the town will come to if the women are taken out of their homes and set at the head of great affairs," Peter Morton mourned.

The gentlemen rose to go. It seemed as if all had been said and their errand ended.

"Your freedom comes to you as a birthday gift, my child." Here van Bursum's high voice was softened as he looked into the clear young eyes that were on a level with his own. "It is my hope that you will use it wisely, although I too am aware of apprehension lest lack of experience hamper you more than you believe possible."

"At least experience did not protect her father's

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ship against pirates," Tom Lane suggested, still full of the *Great Mogul*. "Think you it was the work of one of the known marooners, Captain Tew or—"

But the elder gentlemen, no longer concerned with Judith's affairs, cut short his inquiries by taking their departure, each doubtless turning over in his mind the news she had given them and its possible effect upon his own business ventures.

Tom lingered, not inclined longer to the society of his elders, and designing to allow them somewhat of a start, as his way lay with theirs.

Judith, however, now wished to be about her own affairs, having much that needed attention.

"I thank you for your good services," she told him. "I would not hasten your departure, but I must take Nan home as I promised her."

"I 'm off at once," Tom laughed, "only I 've this to say. I know that you know more about the *Great Mogul* than you told our reverend sirs, and some day I mean to have it out of you. I'll see you soon again." With which words he too went out of the open door, and his whistling could be heard all the way down the brick walk to the gate.

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"And now we will go at once," Judith held out her hand to Nan, who slipped her slender fingers into it confidently, "Metje will clear all away. Moreover it is not far to the Waal Straat and I will be back before she is done."

"I should not take you from your tasks," Nan said, but it was plain that she had no desire to adventure again upon the streets alone.

"I am my own taskmaster now," Judith laughed gaily; "come, let us scamper."

"You will not tell any one in my home that aught went wrong with me to-day," Nan pleaded.

Judith stayed her steps for a moment.

"Pray, why not?" she asked. "Indeed I think they should know for your better protection, since you must go to school with such rude oafs."

Nan pondered this for a moment. She seemed a grave child and old beyond her years. Indeed to Judith it was as if she lay under the shadow of her father's disgrace, for he had been Governor Fletcher's right hand, and was badly smirched by his dealings with pirates.

"This is the way of it," the child explained. "There was no grudge against me because *I* am *me*. It is just that they like not our clothes nor

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that we sit apart at the top of the room; they think the schoolmaster favors the richer pupils. The truth is we know more English than they, so the token is always left with them; and that adds to their ill-will."

"The token?" asked Judith.

"Yes," Nan nodded. "In order that all shall learn to speak English, the first who uses a Dutch word is given a copper token. He may pass it on to any one he catches talking Dutch, and the last who holds it at the end of the day is whipped. To-day it happened that one of us had it all morning. It is a half-holiday, you know, and the lower end of the room was all a-buzz with joy. Indeed Jan Bloemers could not contain himself and when Kiliaen was going up to take his punishment Jan, said out loud, 'He'll get the *plak* at least. Kiliaen, who is very mannerly, made him a little bow and handed him the token. 'Not I!' he said. Jan was whipped, and that made all his friends very angry."

"But was he not fairly caught?" Judith asked.

Nan knitted her brows as if puzzled.

"Yes, and no," she returned. "*Plak* is Dutch, there is no gainsaying that; but there is no

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English word for it. It is not a rod nor even a ruler, and that being the case they did not think it quite fair."

"But that was no reason for teasing you," Judith insisted. "You had naught to do with it."

"I laughed," Nan acknowledged. "It was not at Jan; but that they could not know. It was because Kiliaen reminded me of my Lord Bellomont, he was so—gracious." She had hesitated an instant to find the right word.

"What know you of Lord Bellomont?" Judith asked, surprised that Daniel Homan's daughter should speak so familiarly of his Excellency the governor.

"I go there to sing to Lady Bellomont," the girl said simply. "She is in need of entertainment. Never mind that now. I wish an education. I must learn all I can where I can. My mother examined well their signs and what they were licensed to teach, and decided upon this as the best school in the city. Did my nurse hear that I had met with annoyance, she would ask mother to take me away, and I might lose precious time, lacking a teacher. If I am always met at the

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door, and I myself can arrange that—I'll be as safe where I am as anywhere."

"Very well," Judith agreed, "I shall say nothing. In fact I think it better that I should leave you outside your gate so that you will not have to explain my presence."

"My mother has gone a-visiting in the Jerseys," Nan said, after considering this a moment, "so she would not be at home to receive you; and I shall come soon to thank you as I have not yet found words to do."

Accordingly they parted, but as she ran up the *stoep* before her door Nan turned and waved her hand, calling, "I'll see you soon again."

And Judith realized that this was the second time she had heard the words that day.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH THERE IS MENTION OF A STRANGE FLOWER

ON her return the girl found Metje awaiting her.

"The dainties are on the table near the store-closet, handy for you to lock away," the woman told her. "I've set a pot of water to heat. When it boils we should wash up and we would be done before supper-time."

As in all Dutch households, Judith and Metje did the work together. Here Van Taarl had brought the woman over from Holland as a redemptioner, bound to work for him until she had earned her passage-money, which, with the low rate of wages, took several years. Metje had come when Judith was very little and had not been quick to marry. When Judith's mother died her heart had gone out to the lonely child whose father was so immersed in his business, and she

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had stayed on at suitable wages but without bond.

Van Taarl was quite content that it should be so. Unlike most of the Dutchmen who came to New Amsterdam in Peter Stuyvesant's time, he had no intention of attaching himself to the new country. He acquired no *bouwerie*, no foot of land in the town. His wife inheriting a substantial dwelling from her father, he removed his home and business to it, but that did not alter his plans. He meant to make a great fortune and then return to "Patria."

A very young man when he arrived, he had hardly established himself before the English came and took over the city, renaming it New Yorke. At first he thought he could not endure to live in servitude to his enemies, but he soon found that they were able to do little to change conditions. Dutch was still the language of New Yorke and Dutchmen its inhabitants.

He was pleased when a Dutch fleet under Commodores Evertsen and Benkes retook the town and province in 1673; but he did not greatly grieve when the peace of Westminster conceded the Nieuw Nederlandts to England in 1674. Really, he told himself, it was nothing to him.

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He had done business under the English before and could again.

“The happy revolution” which set Mary Stuart and William of Orange on the English throne saw him still in the city. He was rich, but not yet rich enough.

Queen Mary died. Van Taarl hardly knew it, so immersed was he in his affairs; but he grudged the little he was asked to give to drape the city in mourning at her death. The king was a staunch Dutchman, so he, too, would rather every *stuyver* of a true man's fortune should be hoarded to spend in the Lowlands.

Thus years passed and at last the goal was in sight. It was only a matter of months when Van Taarl should cross the seas to return to the New World no more.

The merchant never spoke of his dreams to any one, least of all to his daughter. It would be time enough to tell Judith what was expected of her when he was quite ready. Moreover she would scarce relish the news, having been her own mistress so long; for in Holland he meant to marry again and found a great family

Then came two unexpected happenings, the

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second less reparable than the first. His ship, the *Great Mogul*, was captured by freebooters, and Nicolaes Van Taarl, who had never had a day's sickness in his life, learned that his end was near.

His first thought was not of his daughter but of his possessions. Later he called her to him and told her of the will he had just made and of what he had planned. And Judith agreed to carry out his wishes in every particular save one. She was not ready to marry. Thus his last words were:

"I do not demand *that* obedience unless there is no other way to fulfil the commands I have laid upon you; but bear this in mind, a father's last wishes are sacred, and it is my pride that no one shall pry into my affairs to say I failed of my intent."

Judith opened her mouth to reply, but he waved her from the room.

"My strength is gone. I would sleep," he said fretfully. "Beside, what need for a flux of words? You know what you must do if you would earn my blessing. A marriage with De Heem's son would set all straight."

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For a moment his hand rested upon her bowed head; but when she looked at him he seemed to have sunk into the sleep from which he never awakened.

The girl could not be expected to grieve deeply for one who had deliberately shut her out of his life, not from unkindness or dislike but from indifference. She quickly took up her tasks again, determined to carry out her father's wishes in every particular. Too well she knew that had there been any other he could trust he would not have turned to her at the last. He had no faith in a female's hardihood or ability; but somewhere within him there had lived a hope that if she kept closely to his plan the results would be what he wished. He was not asking her to do anything on her own initiative. Rather his idea was that, as a reflection in a mirror follows each movement of the one before it, so she, without thought, might follow the plans he had laid before her.

And already in securing her liberty from the Lords Orphan Masters Judith had taken a long step forward. She went to bed that night quite satisfied with her progress, and slept so soundly

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that she failed to waken even when one of the periodical battles between Metje and the watch grew acrimonious over the smoky condition of the lanthorns which, as hers was a seventh house, the law required her to hang out on moonless nights for the illumination of the streets.

Some days were to pass before Judith saw either of her new friends again.

The weather had been too fine to last and a wild storm set in that filled the gutters in the middle of the streets to overflowing and drenched passers-by with the streams shot from the roofs by the rain-spouts.

It cleared at last with a freezing wind out of the northwest, and the girl hurried early to her garden to make sure that the protection for the winter had not been washed from the beds where her precious tulips and other bulbs were planted.

As she worked down toward the front gate in her careful inspection she was accosted from the street and turned to see Tom Lane looking over the wall at her.

"Good day to you," he said smilingly. "I've come for news of the *Great Mogul*. May I enter?"

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Judith bade him welcome and, being somewhat embarrassed by his presence, continued her inspection of her garden beds until Tom grew impatient.

"I can see naught of interest there," he said, gazing appraisingly at the litter, "and I'm vastly curious about the *Great Mogul*. Can you not spare the time to tell me the story?"

"Some months from now, if all goes well, there will be a different tune to sing about my flower-beds," Judith declared. "There is a flower planted there, a surpassing curiosity—"

"Naught can surpass my curiosity, Tom laughed. "Tell me, I pray you, of the piracy. I cannot sleep for thinking of it."

"Come in then," Judith said. "The wind is cutting to-day."

Together they entered the *voorhuis* and Judith threw off her fur-edged jacket and seated herself with her elbows on the table.

"There's not so much to tell, after all," she declared at last. "The ship was seized by another flying the black flag. No one was hurt for no resistance was offered; and the officers and men were marooned on an island where by right

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they should have lived and died, so little was it visited; but, as chance would have it, the *Santa Lucia* out of Venice put in there, her water having gone bad, and so they were taken off ere they had come to want. The captain lost no time in sending my father word of the misadventure. He had found other employ on the ship of a Danish merchant, and had little to tell save the short account of their meeting with a pirate seemingly heavily armed and manned, whom they felt powerless to withstand. The buccaneer put a crew on the *Great Mogul* and sailed away with both ships.

“Two things only he held to be strange. One was something one of the boatmen who landed them on the island let drop, that assured him that it was their vessel and their vessel only the pirate had sailed out to intercept. Does not that seem odd to you?”

Tom gave the matter serious thought.

“Nay,” he said with disappointment, “that’s reasonable enough. ’T is not every day such a rich cargo is set afloat. Doubtless these sea-robbers have spies who forewarn them of such prizes.”

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"That may have been the way of it." Judith wrinkled her brow. "But my father said this voyage was very secret."

"What is the other strange happening?" Tom asked.

"It was not a happening," Judith replied. "A shot was fired across the *Mogul's* bows at day-break. There was scarce light to see their enemy; but as day had dawned and it grew brighter each moment, they could not hope to escape in the dusk, so they lay to and were boarded. No time was lost in securing them, both officers and men. Yet when full daylight was come our captain declared that he found most of his enemy's guns to be dummies."

"How mean you?" Tom asked greatly puzzled.

"Just what I say," Judith answered. "He thought that the boat which had seized them, with her black flag and her many cannons, was in reality no proper pirate but a merchantman with painted ports and sham guns, who had cunningly attacked them while the light was too dim for them to detect the imposition."

"None the less was it a pirate," Tom declared,

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unable to fit his mind to Judith's meaning. "It fired on them and marooned their crew."

"Yes, yes," said the girl impatiently, "I'm not denying that; but for all that it seems to me a strange buccaneer who has no more than a mockery of force to back his threats."

A knock on the door brought Judith to her feet to open it. Nan Homan, attended by her nurse, stood without, undismayed by Krumm the watch-dog, who was growling menacingly.

"This is Nurse Kate," Nan indicated with her hand the substantial figure at her side, "but I know not your name."

"I am Judith Van Taarl," the older girl smiled, acknowledging the respectful curtesy with which Nurse Kate favored her, after an appraising glance to determine whether her charge's new acquaintance was gentle or simple. "If Nurse Kate will go into the kitchen, Metje will soon have ready some tea, which I hope you will share with us."

"Another time," said Nan, "I would like it, if I may come again. Now my mother begs that you will wait upon her. She longs to thank you for the care you took of me on Saturday."

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"But I thought that was to be a secret between us," Judith said, rather surprised to find that the story had been told.

"So it was," Nan nodded. "You see, mother was away in the Jerseys and I forgot her. It was of Katie I was thinking chiefly. I might have known I could not keep aught secret from my mother. And now she is home with a sprained ankle and, as she cannot come to you, she begs that you will visit her."

This was a request that could hardly be refused, and Judith, with an apology to Tom, ran upstairs to make ready.

Nan had elected to await her out of doors and there Judith found the child with an arm about the neck of the great watch-dog. Metje, who had hurried to make friends with Katie, pointed to them at once.

"Never have I seen the like!" she declared. "The beast is so savage that I fear to so much as feed him. I go in trembling of his great jaws, yet look at him now. I vow he hath a smile on his silly face and appeareth as if he would like to purr."

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Nan laughed outright at the aptness of this description, and when the child laughed the brightness of her smile irradiated her countenance like sunlight.

"He plays with you. It is his jest to frighten you the more because he feels that you are afraid. I fear him not and so he loveth me. Give me your paw, sir, in token of friendship."

Almost sheepishly Krumm lifted his heavy paw as he was bidden and put it in the small hand outstretched to receive it.

"Now we are friends," said Nan, "and I shall come often to see you. We will have many romps together. I like you better than I do my mother's spaniel dogs, who are empty-headed and vain. All they care for is to be brushed, curled and perfumed. They are fops like his Excellency, Lieutenant-Governor Nanfan."

"Missy," cried Nurse Kate chidingly, have a care. 'T is an ill thing to speak of those in power without due thought."

"My words were measured," Nan returned, "and there was no offense in them, for his Excellency liketh to be known as an exquisite."

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"None the less," her nurse urged, looking this way and that, "'t is important that we give no offense to the authorities."

"Enough! Enough!" cried Nan, the care-free joy gone from her face. "I will order my tongue. You need say no more."

Her moment of childish forgetfulness was over and she turned from Krumm without a parting caress; but he would not have it so and followed her to the end of his tether, gently licking her hand with his rough tongue, so that at the last her heart softened and once more, impetuously, she threw her arms around his neck and kissed the top of his great head.

"Were you mine I would have you sleep at the foot of my bed and never, never leave me," she said in farewell. Then, turning to Judith, she asked, "why do you keep him tethered? When one is held on a leash one is always sad." The words were spoken as if she too felt herself in bonds.

Judith, anxious to bring back the smiles to the child's face, answered her lightly.

"You see, Krumm and I have never been on intimate terms. We respect each other but I

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have yet to cultivate his better acquaintance. I'm not quite sure that he would like it if I whispered little love words in his ear."

Nan stopped and looked at her keenly, then she smiled her radiant smile.

"He would like it," she said. "I can tell you that," and she slipped her hand within Judith's arm.

"Who would like what?" Tom asked, coming hurriedly out of the house where he had lingered, looking at a model of the *Great Mogul* which hung from one of the rafters.

"Any one would like to have Judith say them love words," Nan answered mischievously. She remembered the tall lad at once and naturally fancied him an old friend of Judith's.

Tom started almost imperceptibly, then he laughed.

"'T is your intent to mystify me," he declared.

"That it is," said Judith, blushing a little. "We spoke only of Krumm, the great hound my father brought out of Denmark. Nan has won his regard and thinks I might do the same."

"It would be worth the doing," young Lane told her. "Those dogs make faithful friends—

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and faithfuller enemies," he added, "for they never forget a wrong."

"I see that it behooves me to court Krumm with soft sayings, pretty manners, and tasty tidbits, and I shall set about it at once," Judith declared.

Nan looked up at her to discover if she meant her words; then, with one of her sudden rever-sions to childishness, she threw her arms around the older girl and cried:

"Now I am happy! I could not bear to see him so lonely, for Krumm is such a sweet puppy."

This description of the great hound was droll enough, yet Judith looked over the top of Nan's head at Tom without a smile. Her affection for the child was growing and she felt something infinitely touching about her.

A little later they reached their destination and Nan turned to Tom, her manner once again that of a woman grown.

"My mother must keep to her room," she explained. "'T is my regret that I cannot ask you to join us in a dish of tea until she has recovered."

"A regret which I share," Tom declared, taking off his hat and making them a very grand

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bow, before sounding three portentous knocks with the knocker. "But I hope that the time of our next meeting may not be long deferred."

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH JUDITH IS CALLED A MISER

AS the door closed upon them Nan gave three little skips.

"I like him," she announced positively. "He hath been well brought up. The way to his hat is no mystery to him. And now we will go at once to my mother, who cannot come to greet you, as her foot must not be touched to the floor."

They ascended the stairs together and found Mrs. Homan in her bedchamber. Judith had no wish to pry into the affairs of the Homans', knowing Daniel Homan to have been discredited with Fletcher as an active aid to pirates; but it was evident, even in this short passage through the house, that its owner was in affluent circumstances. Below stairs the girl caught glimpses of many rich furnishings; but it was upstairs that she found a luxury such as she had never seen before. There was a dressing-table having

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a mirror with a silver frame, a dressing-box, from which gold and ivory instruments peeped forth, soft chairs covered with needlework, and a great bed whose silk-fringed hangings did not conceal the lady who, wrapped in silk, reposed on its down cushions with one foot on a pillow.

"Come in, my dear," she said cordially, as Judith paused on the threshold, "I could not wait until this hurt was healed to thank you for your care of Nan." Impatiently she twitched aside her flowered bed-gown to show her swollen ankle. "My poppet, draw up a chair for your friend; then tell them below stairs to set out the tea-board and bring it here. You shall play housewife and serve us as though you were a daughter grown instead of such a baby thing. The ordering of everything is in your hands." She handed Nan her silver chatelaine and keys; but said no more until she heard the child's light step upon the stair, when she turned to her visitor feverishly.

"'T was good of you to come. Had you been English I should not have asked it, for Lord Bellomont is quick to visit his displeasure on any who seem friendly to Fletcher's friends. Yet I

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must hear of Nan's adventure. I have sent my sons out of the province that their father's connection with our late governor be not a clog about their feet, but can it be that I may not even keep my baby at my side?"

"No, no!" said Judith. "This was not a movement against Nan," and she quickly recounted all she knew of the matter.

"'T is better than I feared," Mrs. Homan said, "yet I find myself in a cleft stick. If I lodge a complaint these baser-born children will watch their chance to even the matter with her. If, on the contrary, naught is said, they will think she lacketh a defender."

"Can you not teach her at home?" Judith asked. "I was so taught."

"I have neither the learning nor the patience," Mrs. Homan answered.

"But you might find a tutor," Judith suggested. "My master hath gone back to Patria, else he would serve your turn."

"Nan is such a tender babe. I would that we could find her a learned governess," the mother said. "No price would stay me."

"It might be possible—" Judith hesitated at

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a loss to express the idea that had suddenly come to her. Then she began afresh. "An you would care to have me direct her studies until such time as you find some one better qualified, I will gladly instruct her for certain hours each day. Ready money will be very welcome to me."

In her astonishment Mistress Homan sat upright.

"But I thought—" she began. "Are you not—?" She came to a second stop.

"Yes," said Judith, "I am Judith Van Taarl, whom you have doubtless heard spoken of as a great heiress. But my possessions are in goods, not gold, and I do not wish to be hastened by need to sell aught below my price. Nor do I wish to go a-borrowing, lest the Lords Orphan Masters question their wisdom in leaving me to my own direction."

Mrs. Homan, managing to conceal her puzzlement that a girl of Judith's standing should find herself in need of money, gratefully accepted the offer; and on Nan's arrival, escorting Kate and the tea-board, there was great rejoicing over the news.

Judith went home that afternoon counting her-

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self lucky to have won both friends and lucrative employment. She knew now that she had been lonely and meant to be so no more. The sight of Krumm's house reminded her of the hound. Might it not be that his disposition seemed crabbed because he was lonely too?

"Krumm," she called, "come forth, sir!"

Obediently the great beast scrambled out of his door, and for a moment she knew not what to do. Indeed she grew embarrassed as if she had begun a conversation which she had no idea how to continue. Then, half timidly, not because she was afraid but because to offer a caress was new to her, she put out her hand and patted his smooth head.

Krumm wagged a heavy tail politely; then of a sudden something melted within her and Judith threw her arms around his neck as she had seen Nan do, while the dog wriggled with delight.

"O Krumm," she said, "we will be friends, won't we?"

A month more of the winter had gone by and Judith had become quite accustomed to teaching Nan, when, returning one day from tea with

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Mistress Homan, she found a number of girls, members of the Company to which she had belonged since her earliest childhood, seated in the *voorhuis* awaiting her.

"Metje told us that you had been invited out for your *stuk*," Geertruy Dircksen remarked.

"I hope she offered you something to eat, notwithstanding that," Judith said, mindful of the Dutch tradition of hospitality.

"She did," Lysbet Elsenwaert assured her, "but we had eaten ere we came."

"We were glad to know that you were visiting," Blandina Jaspyn suggested. "We took it to mean that your period of mourning was over."

"'T is time it was!" Geertruy Dircksen spoke energetically and emphatically. "If a widow may marry in six months without shame—"

"It has naught to do with me how soon a widow may remarry," Judith said, a faint hostility in her tone. "I am little minded yet for gaiety."

"Yet you went a-visiting to-day," Blandina hinted.

"I went to see an older woman with a hurt foot," Judith explained impatiently.

"Oh, *wae*," sighed Marya Jaspyn, Blandina's

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younger sister, who had not spoken before. "We had been hoping that you were done with sadness and would be ready to give us a party to mark your return to our company of playmates."

"This house was clearly made for dancing parties after the new English fashion," declared Blandina eagerly.

"Never could there be a finer floor than your great chamber boasts," Geertruy said, a trifle enviously. "Were it mine without elders or overseers to hinder me, I would engage the new French dancing-master, who has but recently come to the city, to teach our Company here once a week."

Judith's cheeks reddened with annoyance at this broad hint. It was easy for her to imagine how the girls had let their tongues run on and their hopes rise while they sat waiting for her return.

"I'm sorry that you have not a room like it," she remarked, trying to hide her irritation.

"You—you could lend us this," Blandina suggested hopefully. "If you didn't care to meet the whole expense of the teacher—"

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"Which, in your own house, we thought you might prefer," Marya put in.

"Each one of the company who joined the lessons would gladly pay a part," Geertruy and Blandina said almost in one breath.

"There can be no such meetings here," Judith stated positively. "I am surprised that you should expect it."

"And pray, why not?" Geertruy asked. "What is the good of your freedom from government if you do not mean to use it?"

"I do mean to use it, in such a way as to prove that it was not a mistake to trust me with it," Judith said. "Think well of what you are suggesting. I am quite sure your mothers would never let you come to parties for dancing here, where there is no older *huisvrouw* to keep watch over us. Well you know how the Dominie Selÿns would look upon such a plan."

"In truth I had not thought of begging our reverend pastor to join our company," Blandina said saucily.

"Seriously, Judith," it was Lysbet who spoke, "I do not believe our mothers would object, so

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long as we did not go outside of our own Company for guests. We have always played together. It is no secret that our Tonis and Geertruy were promised in their cradles, while Blandina and Joost Varrevanger are almost—”

“Leave Joost and me out of it,” Blandina interposed airily, “’t will be time enough to tie our names together when I have untied his marriage knot.” This was a reference to the usual present from a suitor, of money tied in a handkerchief embroidered with an appropriate motto. If the girl untied the knot it signified acceptance, and Blandina’s show of spirit raised a little laugh.

“She’s bold enough when Joost is not near,” Marya hinted.

“An she cares so little for Joost, she will not mind hearing that he was seen footing to it to the Locust Trees with that pretty English miss, Audrey Lane,” Geertruy said teasingly.

“He may walk with whom he chooses,” Blandina declared, tossing her head, but coloring finely at the same time. “The Klaver Waytie and the Maagde Paetje are alike open to him.”

These places were all resorts of sweethearts, and it was evident that Blandina was seriously

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hurt at the idea of Joost's defection, try as she might to hide it.

Even her sister Marya, pink and white as an apple-blossom but selfish and more than a little stupid, saw this and thought to comfort her by berating Joost.

"I've small liking for the English, have you, Judith?" Then without waiting for an answer she went on. "Their ways are not our ways. Dutch lads should keep to Dutch girls. Why do we go in Companies together if we are to see ourselves supplanted by Englishy strangers? There is a gallant prospect from the Locust Trees, but Joost should think shame of himself—"

"Be silent, Marya." Blandina, having had time to recover from her surprise, spoke now with unlooked-for dignity. "Joost and I are not promised. He is quite free to go where he will. I would be the last to wish to hinder his friendships. As for the English, we have invited none to join our Company. It might be better if we had."

"What mean you by that?" asked Geertruy, surprised.

"Just what I say," Blandina replied. "We are

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too Dutch. There is scarce another Company which has no English members. There are things we might learn from the Islanders."

A storm of protest broke out at this. Blandina waited till it had expended itself, then went on as if no one had spoken.

"Indeed I meant what I said. 'T is all very well for those like our parents, who have known Patria, to cling to thoughts of another 'happy revolution,' or some such fortunate happening, to throw them back into the arms of the *Nederlands*. But what are all their politics to us? We were born here. Here we shall live and die. The Lowlands and great England are alike names only to us. Therein lies the gist of the matter. We have a Dutch king, but English rulers. We may call ourselves Dutch and talk Dutch; but how long can that last when the very schools must teach in English? And, if we stir abroad, it is upon English officials we must depend."

"There is truth in what you say," Judith agreed, while the other girls sat wondering how their talk had traveled away from the pleasant subject of dancing to this uninteresting topic,

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fit for discussion between bearded men, not gay girls.

"What think you we should do?"

"We should be satisfied to be English or we should go elsewhere to live."

"Satisfied to be English!" Geertruy cried indignantly. "Never! Never! *Orange boven!*"

"You may say 'Orange over all' as often as you please, but it won't alter the fact that Patria does n't want us enough to fight for us. English we are, and English we 'll stay."

"What then is your idea of what we should do?" Lysbet spoke almost timidly. "Surely 't is too late to ask new members into our Company. They would feel out of place among such old friends."

"It would be for us to make them feel at home. At our next meeting I shall propose that Audrey Lane be invited to join us. She and her brother have but lately come from Europe, and, if they have not attached themselves elsewhere, we might persuade them. I look to you to uphold me."

"She *and* her brother!" Geertruy said jeeringly. "Oh, ho! That explains why you took it

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so lightly that Joost walked with her to the Locust Trees; for I judge the handsome *jonchere* who accompanied them was this brother you speak of."

"Geertruy, you are too bad," Judith said, to cover Blandina's relief at the news that Joost and the pretty stranger had not gone unattended. "I think you love mischief for its own sake."

"'Tis amusing to see how people will take things," Geertruy acknowledged. "To make up to you, Blandina, for my jesting, I too will ask that these English join our Company."

"But, to return to our first subject," Marya put in anxiously, "will you not think better of it, Judith, and let us meet here for dancing and games?"

"I cannot," Judith replied, and it was evident to the densest of her friends that this answer was final.

"But you will soon join us once more?" Blandina asked affectionately. "The skating should be good again. We miss you, Judith."

Judith pressed Blandina's hand, yet at the same time shook her head in the negative.

"I fear I cannot," she said. "Now that I am

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my own mistress I am also my own taskmaster. I must drive myself to forget that I am a young girl and must learn to think and work like a man."

"What is the use of great possessions if they are to make your life one long slavery?" cried Lysbet aghast.

"Will you never amuse yourself again, Judith?" asked Marya, her eyes wide with astonishment. "At least say that you will go with us in the spring after the wild strawberries when they ripen. None of our Company have ever been absent from the festival, and this year we are to have fine new baskets and the prettiest, gayest ribbons ever I saw."

"Do say you will go, Judith," the other girls chorused, and Judith relented. Into her mind had come a picture of windy clouds overhead, sunny fields embroidered thickly with flowers, and the scent of wild strawberries in the air. It would be very pleasant to be of the party if Tom Lane and his pretty sister were there too.

"I do not promise," she said, "only—I'll see what can be done."

"Then we'll buy a basket for you," Geertruy said. "The *wilden* have brought one in to order

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from. An you see it, you 'll never have the heart to keep it unused."

"No, no!" Judith cried anxiously, "lay not up such expense for me. My old basket is sound and good. If I go at all it must serve me."

The girls stared at her, quite astonished.

"But you will not look like one of our Company if you carry a different basket," Marya protested, "and truly the ribbons are to be sweetly pretty."

"That cannot be helped," Judith said obstinately, cutting her short. "If I go at all, and it by no means certain that I can, my basket will serve every purpose. Of course if you would rather I did not come with an old basket I can stay at home."

"Nonsense!" Blandina protested, "Come as you will, so that you come. We cannot do without you."

"It is still a long way off," Judith murmured, beginning to draw back a little in her secret thoughts from the idea of the festival.

"Nay, now, we 'll hear no more," said Geertruy in her bluff way. "You 've said you 'll come and we mean to hold you to it, so do not begin to hunt for excuses so early. Make haste, *juffrouwen*."

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We must take our leave, nor hinder longer this woman of affairs."

With considerable chattering to hide a certain constraint that had arisen, the young girls finally departed and Judith went at once into her father's office to take up her study of his books and papers.

The two Jaspyns passing that side of the house on their homeward way, Blandina saw her through the window-bars and waved to her.

"Whom are you saluting?" Marya asked, looking to right and left.

"Only Judith," Blandina answered, "but she saw me not. Already she had opened a great ledger on her father's desk and was doubtless deep in figures."

"I used to think it would be a wondrous thing to awaken some morning and hear that I had been left a great fortune," Marya said, "but now that I see what it hath done to Judith I am not so sure."

"What then hath it done to Judith?" Blandina demanded, bristling, for Judith was her chosen friend.

"Oh," said Marya in injured tones, "I know

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well that I am only your sister, and must be very careful what I say of your friend; but even you must admit that wealth hath greatly changed her."

"I think we did wrong to so insist that she should fill her house with dancing and gaiety before she herself felt ready," Blandina said. I should not have suggested it in an ordinary case, but her father scarce seemed to know that Judith lived. I've sat at table with them when he said no word save the grace."

"Then why should she grieve that he is no more?" asked Marya not unreasonably.

"Does she grieve at his loss or perchance does she grieve because she does not grieve more."

"Oh, *wae!*" cried Marya, "if you must ask riddles ask gayer ones. As for instance why Judith balked at buying a new basket?"

"That was strange," Blandina admitted. "I can only think that you dwelt too much on the gay ribbons, so that she felt that she would seem heartless if she went so tricked out."

"Of course it would be my fault!" Marya retorted. "You would be sure to make it out that I had injured her tender sensibilities; but if you

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ask me, that is not why she did not want the basket."

"What then was her reason?" Blandina turned and looked at her sister with some surprise. Marya was dull and slow, not apt to push forward her opinions; but now she spoke as one with a secret to reveal.

"I have thought it all out," she said importantly. "Like father like child." She returned Blandina's gaze as if she expected her to be astounded at this weighty news.

"What then?" Blandina asked irritably. "For I imagine you think you mean something."

"Oh, *wae!*" cried Marya, "never do you credit me with any understanding. What I mean is so clear to me that I thought one word would set your clever wits on the track."

Blandina said nothing, and the younger sister went on in a complaining tone.

"Even you grant that the Here Van Taarl was a peculiar man. Known to be rich, he never seemed to find enjoyment in his riches. He had no *bouwerie*, no place on the shore of Nassau Iseland. He bought nothing new or rich for their house. It, and all that is in it of value,

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came down from her mother's parents, for Judith herself told me so."

"What is your meaning?" asked Blandina, stopping short in her walk, "for I see now that you have a meaning."

"'T is this," returned Marya crossly, "if a man loves money, not for the good things that it will buy him but to hoard and keep it for itself, we call him a miser. The Here Van Taarl, to my thinking, was a miser; and now that she hath money of her own, quantities of money, more than we could count, and refuseth to spend so much of it as would buy her her basket and ribbons for the strawberry festival, I think Judith is like to him. That's what I meant when I said, 'like father like child.' Judith Van Taarl is a miser too."

CHAPTER VI

IN WHICH A BARGAIN IS STRUCK AND A TOKEN GIVEN

MEANWHILE, at her father's desk, Judith was arriving at a clear understanding of her position as his heiress.

When the light failed she lit a whale-oil lamp and toiled on, regardless of the shadows that used to send her twittering to Metje when she was younger. Thus she had worked each evening almost since the day of the Here Van Taarl's death, but now she was reaching the end of her labors and it was plain to her that the commands set upon her were like to be a net about her feet.

At nine o'clock Metje came to call her to supper, which they took together, Metje being careful to keep her own place toward the foot of the table.

The first course was prunes, stewed with barley and spices. This was followed by the remains

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of the fish which they had had for their dinner at eleven, reheated now in a tasty sauce of Metje's concocting. When this was removed she set nuts and raisins on the table.

"There are no more almonds," she explained. "You were away or busy all day, so I did not trouble you to buy them. You will have only kiskitomas nuts to-night."

Judith's face had clouded as the meal progressed. Now, after a little hesitation, she spoke what was in her mind.

"I like well these hickory-nuts which we gather ourselves," she said. "I shall buy no more almonds which are very costly. Moreover, while there was a man in the house whose great frame called for strong nourishment, such heavy suppers were needful; but for two females they are gluttonous, and lead only to restless sleep and nightmares. From now on let our supper be of bread and cheese. That should suffice."

Metje's face showed her aversion to this plan most clearly.

"Nay now, *meisje*," she said, coaxingly, "none can accuse you of gluttony. You but pick a little here and there as if you were a bird. And, as for

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me, if I am to labor in the garden like a man this spring, surely will I feel the need of a man's food to sustain me." This last was a cunning argument. Metje held herself very clever to have thought of it.

"When you work in the garden you will have *salat* to add to your cheese, if you want it," Judith replied; "but for the really hard work of spading and cultivating I shall employ a laborer now and then to help us." To herself she added, "His wage can come out of my money for teaching," but she did not say this aloud.

"That at least is good news," Metje returned, "yet I like not signs of parsimony in the young. One so rich as you should set a rich table."

"'T is better still that I set a good example," said Judith, with the ghost of a smile. "Surely if the rich govern not their appetites 't is too much to expect those less well instructed to do so."

"'T is useless for me to measure tongues with ye," said Metje, with some ill humor, "but I tell you plainly that I do not know you these days. You act as if you had lost a fortune, not inherited one."

"With money come cares and responsibilities,"

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Judith rejoined. "When the wealth was my father's, I never gave it a thought, being satisfied that he would speak his mind if we spent too lavishly. Now that I have no one to govern me, I must govern myself."

"In truth," Metje said snappily, "it does not seem that you will need to chide yourself withal. As to your father, he was so preyed on by his sister-in-law's wastefulness that, once she was gone, my small accounts seemed to him miraculous."

"You are a wonderful manager, Metje; that I know," Judith returned soothingly. "There is no better in all the settlements; so, for yourself, you shall have all that you crave. But for my part I shall henceforth eat naught but bread and cheese."

"That indeed would be a pretty sight," Metje scoffed, not at all appeased. "Me, seated below the salt, feasting on delicacies; while you, at the top of the table, live on prison fare. I think I see myself cooking crabs with walnuts for Metje, medlars with sweet butter and green ginger for Metje, pasties for Metje—"

"Then save such dainties for feast-days,"

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Judith laughed, "and now let us hasten to wash up or it will be ten o'clock and the clearing clock will ring ere we are ready for bed."

Fortunately for all concerned, Metje had been greatly taken with Nan Homan and joyfully accepted her daily visits, glad of anything that drew Judith from poring over her father's ledgers and account-books. Once her own mistress, the girl had wasted no time in making arrangements to sell the contents of the storehouse. Vendue criers were engaged to cry the news through the town and Judith felt that when the sale was over she would be rid of considerable responsibility; for there were furs, woolens, and blankets among the goods, and the season was coming when moth would have to be guarded against if these were not disposed of.

Nan and she were at lessons one morning when a click of the gate-latch and a furious rush by Krumm, who had been promoted to a position of trust and no longer was chained, brought both girls to the rescue of a visitor.

This was a little man whose curled black beard and hair proclaimed him for the Jew he was.

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He had been driven back against the gate by Krumm's onslaught and stood there dazed, hat in hand.

"'T is here the vendue is to be held?" he asked in a trembling voice, when the dog had been called off. "At the Sign of the Barrow and Bale?" For as was usual Van Taarl's place of business was known by the name of its sign rather than that of its owner.

"Yes," Judith replied, "but the goods are not to be shown until the day before the sale."

"A vendue is a game of chance for the seller as well as for the buyer," said the Portuguese. "Do you wish to try your luck?"

"I wish only to be rid, at a fair price, of a business that I am not trained to conduct," Judith replied.

"Then show me your goods. It may happen that I will buy."

Judith hesitated, her glance taking in the threadbare coat and faded hat of her visitor. Yet there was something kindly in the face of the little man that drew her to him in spite of herself.

"The conditions of this sale are unusual," she faltered. "I cannot take beavers or seawant or

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any commodity. I must have coin in hand."

"That even might be arranged," the Jew said, "though I am a poor man, according to my reckoning."

"Go you back to your work, Nan," Judith told the child. "Write the copy I set you, 'Industry rewardeth self,' twenty times. When that is finished Nurse Katy will be here to fetch you." Then she turned again to her visitor. "Pray follow me. I will show you the inventory and such of the goods as you desire to see and handle. All are warranted to be new, unused, and in the best of condition."

The lightning rapidity with which the little man made himself master of the contents of the shop took Judith's breath away.

"These were a good bargain," he said, fingering some rolls of lord's serge. They came by the *Rose of Guelderland* and your father gave no more than half what one must pay to-day in the open market." He made some figures on a tablet he carried. "These fire-irons are from England by the swift *Sea-horse*, and are in need of grease. The *Bourse of Amsterdam*, a lumbering ship, brought this velvet which is not quite

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perfect so that it must go cheap under the hammer. You will find that the pile is unevenly shorn near the selvage."

Judith examined and found the defect he had mentioned, although she had not observed it before.

"It is true that these goods came upon the ships you have named, but how knew you that? I did n't tell you."

"There was no need," the man murmured in his beard. "Such things have faces for me. Once I see them I know them again. There is scarce one article in all this storehouse on which I cannot fix the price he paid and what the Here Van Taarl was ready to sell for."

"'T is marvelous," said Judith in honest admiration. "I asked my father was it his wish that I should keep the store, and I confess myself hurt that he did not hold me capable, yet now I see that he was wise and right. I have studied the books and the labels on each article, only to forget next day what I had so painfully acquired. To me, one piece of velvet differs from another only in color, yet I know that there are vastly different prices entered against them in the lists.

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Must all who would prosper in trade have knowledge like to yours?"

"There be others who have seeing eyes," the little man explained. "My brother Asser can tell the weight, the flaws, if any, and the true value of any jewel he hath once held in his hand. My cousin David is a judge of pictures, *lacs* and curios. I know only a little of such things, but in dealing with the ordinary goods I, Salvador Dacosta, can hold my own."

He turned again to his work of appraisal, and Judith, watching him in amazement, observed how deft and gentle and how well-kept were his long, slim-fingered hands. These seemed to serve him as an extra pair of eyes, for if they but touched an object he was satisfied and entered a note of it on his tablets without once stopping to look further; and in a surprisingly short time he professed himself satisfied.

"Here are my figures," he said. "I show them to you freely. Salvador Dacosta is no robber of the orphan. In this column is what your father paid. In the other column is what he expected to receive. Perchance at private sale, in a period of a year, you might realize so much

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money; but your need of haste is more urgent than you know. I will give you a sum midway between the two figures, saving you the cost of the vendue and the sack that must flow to put people in a buying mood. That would be a great expense, so what say you?"

"I know not what to say, save 'Thank you,'" Judith faltered. Indeed the amount named was generous, more than she had dared count on from the auction; yet, even while she spoke, her heart misgave her lest in some way this strange Portuguese was plotting to overreach her; and the man read her thoughts and answered them with true dignity.

"My child," he said, "your eyes are wells of truth that tell what passeth in your mind. Without doubt I am a Jew, but I am an honest Jew. I have no need to take one *stuyver* that is not lawfully mine. Therefore I say to you that if you agree to accept my offer—and trust me it is best you should—I will pay you within the hour in gold, and will take from this house no piece of goods until you have placed the gold in the safe-keeping of some true man of this town—Mijnhere van Cortlandt or some one else of solid

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worth—and he has declared that you may rest satisfied.”

“Forgive me that I distrusted you,” Judith said impulsively, not attempting to deny her guilt, “but in sooth I think it is not so much you I distrusted as myself. I see myself so unequal to the great task imposed upon me.”

“You will be equal to your trust,” Dacosta declared positively. “In the end you will prevail, for your motives are worthy of all praise. Now after this bargain there are two things I ask you to remember and one to forget.”

Judith looked her astonishment and the strange man went on.

“First, remember that there are in this world two sorts of fools. One who pays too late and one who pays too soon. Let nothing tempt you to be one of the latter. Second, remember, should you need help, that this, sent to David Cohen at the City Tavern near the ferry, may avail something.”

He picked out of a box on the shelf as he spoke a carved mother-of-pearl fish such as were commonly used as counters in many childish games. This he pressed into her hand. “And

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lastly, and this mayhap is most important of all, forget for the present that you ever saw Salvador Dacosta or so much as heard his name."

"But who shall I say bought this great stock?" Judith looked about her, bewildered.

"The man who brings you the gold will give a name," he said carelessly, "for all you know I may be acting for another. And now, farewell. If you do not scorn a Jew's blessing it is yours, for the worth of a dutiful child is above rubies."

The Portuguese threw open the shop door and passed out that way, without again going into the house, and thus it happened that Metje did not see him; for she had gone a-marketing when he arrived, and with Metje the business of marketing was never entered upon lightly.

Alone in the shop Judith looked about her almost regretfully. During her father's lifetime she had rarely crossed its threshold. Since the responsibilities attendant upon her inheritance had rested heavy upon her shoulders she had spent many toilsome hours there and in the small office that opened off it, and she felt a sudden and most unexpected pang at giving it up.

She went into the office and, laying the carved

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fish in a tray with some dry and crumbling wafers, and mechanically turning over the hour-glass, she seated herself at the desk, staring at the shelf of books and packets of paper tied with green tape as if she had never before seen them. What did the strange Jew mean by the things he had said to her? Almost they sounded as if he knew what she believed buried in her own heart. Indeed he had hinted at a knowledge greater than hers, and that he had read her very thoughts in a way that seemed supernatural there was no denying.

The familiar surroundings faded away. She no longer saw the rolls of tobacco, the shears and chopper, the string of bills, the painted money-chest with its carved legs, the basket of long Gouda pipes, the quills for pens, or the sand-shaker for drying the ink.

Instead the face of the Jew was before her, and she seemed to hear his voice saying, "Your need of haste is more urgent than you know."

How long she had been there she could not have said. It was Metje's insistent calling that brought her to herself.

"I knew not where to look for you," the woman

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said, bustling in. "I thought it might be that you had walked out to fetch Nan again. There's a strange man at the kitchen door who demands speech with you. I shall not leave you alone with him. He is clearly mad; but if he seems dangerous forget not to call Krumm to defend us. I will purposely set the door ajar so that we can slip back within the house."

"Nay, then," Judith protested, not a little startled, "what makes you think this poor creature is crazed? And if he is why must I talk with him?"

"What else can I think?" Metje asked. "He hath two great bags which he swears are full of gold and says he hath bought the whole storehouse out from top shelf to floor. He vows that not so much as a reel of thread remains to you."

"What name doth he give?" The girl was naturally curious on this point.

"Smathers, the silly says he's called, and he plans to take the goods by ship to the South River. For a minute he spoke so reasonable I almost thought him in his senses."

"He is," said Judith, slipping down from the

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high stool on which she was perched. "I wonder if he will help me carry the gold to the Here van Bursum's."

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH MUCH GOLD CHANGETH HANDS

JOB SMATHERS proved to be Salvador Dacosta's emissary, as Judith had guessed.

"The money is here to the uttermost farthing," he said. "Even has it been sorted out in English gold to be the readier for your use. 'Tis in bags of a hundred unclipped pieces, and 'tis my belief, so careful has been the count, that you will find not so much as one pistole, nor one doubloon, to give rise to a question. By your leave I will sit while you look it through."

"Is all *that* gold?" Metje asked, her eyes popping. "Your very own? And yet you wish to eat naught but bread and cheese for supper?"

"I have no intention of keeping the gold here," Judith explained to the man, ignoring Metje's complaint. "I purpose to leave it in the charge of the Here van Bursum if you will consent to carry it thither for me."

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"Nay, miss," Smathers returned, "I beg you to hold me excused. I am no bravo ready to die in defense of this fortune, which is yours and not mine, if you take my meaning. I've been followed on my way here by several naughty-looking fellows, and I am greatly relieved to complete my errand without ill hap. The gold now is yours. Count it or not as best suits you. My only remaining business with you is to get your signature to this satisfaction, when I will in good time begin the removal of the stores."

"There's no necessity to count the gold," Judith said hesitatingly. "I am well aware there is no intent to cheat me."

"Not count the gold!" exclaimed Metje, scandalized. "A fine business woman, you. Give it to me, then. I'll count it. Never before, nor in my lifetime again I dare swear, will I see such a lot of precious metal." She lifted the big bags that contained the smaller ones, with a grunt at their weight, and went inside with them.

"Will naught persuade you to accompany me to the Here van Bursum's?" Judith asked. "'T is but a short distance. I cannot think there is danger from foot-pads, but, on the other hand,

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the bags are heavy and I could scarce manage them alone."

"My errand is done," Smathers said, shaking his head with true English stubbornness. "I shall not tempt fortune a second time. Who can say that if we were set on and robbed I might not be accused of standing in with the robbers? You've got your gold. 'Tis for you to guard it now."

Judith saw that nothing would move the man and gave over the attempt. But, if his tale was true and he had been followed to her house, she felt that it was no place to keep her money, nor did she like the idea of walking the streets with it unprotected.

She slipped down the path to the gate, for once without a thought of her flowers. She was pondering in her mind where she could ask for help when she saw Nan, attended by her nurse, returning from her dinner. Here at least was a trusty messenger, and she hailed the child with even more than her usual delight.

"I want you to go an errand for me," she explained at once, "yet I know not quite where

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to send you. I need help." In a few words she explained the situation and Job Smather's fears.

"Nay, then," said Kate shrewdly, "methinks this man is too anxious to establish his innocence before he hath been doubted. If you ask me, I believe he himself plans to recover the gold from your messenger."

"I could send for some of my Company," Judith suggested, ignoring Kate's remark, her mind still intent on securing an escort for the money. "The Jaspyns, Wouter or Piet, or the Varrevangers; but they are all scarce more than lads."

"I have a friend." Nan spoke eagerly. "A man of mighty deeds. His name is Robin Marrow."

Nurse Kate snorted.

"'T is a strong man and a doughty I'll not deny, but scarce one—"

"I know what is in your mind to say," Nan turned upon her nurse, stamping her foot in a passion of indignation. "Were this treasure mine, I would entrust it to his sole keeping to prove how you misjudge him; but now my idea

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is that another must be found to carry the bag, and I will instruct Robin that he is to guard this messenger with his life."

Judith looked at Kate, who nodded her consent to this.

"Robin will do naught to anger *her*," she acknowledged. "He is my brother, miss, and I live in fear of his backsliding. He was once a bloody pirate," she added in so low a tone that Nan at the gate, waving her kerchief frantically to some one she saw in the distance, did not overhear her words.

"Here comes the very one of all others best fitted to help us," the child cried complacently. "'T is Tom Lane, earlier than is his wont." For in truth Tom had developed what might almost be called a habit of dropping in and interrupting the lesson at some time in the afternoon.

"Oh," said Judith, "tell him nothing of this case, Nan. I have no claim on Master Lane such as one hath on the young men of her own Company. I could not ask him to run a risk on my account."

"There will be no risk," Nan rejoined. "Robin is as good as ten men in a fight. He hath told

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me so himself, in all modesty. I 'll bid him take care of Tom."

"Will I then need taking care of?" Tom's sharp ears had warned him that he was under discussion even before he had crossed the stepping-stones of the gutter. "What adventure are you embarking me on now?"

The tale had to be told over again from the beginning, and for the moment Tom was young enough to be carried away with enthusiasm at the prospect of a tussle; but, when Nan had gone with Nurse Kate to seek Robin, there was time for his English caution to cool his ardor.

"Who is this Robin?" he asked, knitting his brows. "After all, this is a serious trust. I must make sure that I am not carrying your fortune into deeper danger than it would be here in your father's strong box."

"Robin is a pirate, a reformed one, I gather," Judith replied, "and in truth I like not the idea of rushing you into peril on my account. Some of the lads of my own Company—"

"In that case," Tom suggested jealously, "there is no reason for favoring others of them above me. My sister and I have joined your

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Company even to-day. 'T is that I've come to tell you."

Before Judith could reply suitably to this announcement, Tom went on:

"Yet am I not satisfied to run risks with your money. I must think of a plan. But first let us be rid of this Job Smathers, as quickly as possible."

They went up the path together where, finding Smathers patiently waiting on the kitchen *stoep*, Judith called in to Metje to bid her hasten the count.

"Seventy-seven, seventy-eight,—speak not to me lest you put me out,—seventy-nine, eighty—" Metje's voice droned on. "*Meisje*, I have handled every guinea here. How many should there be?"

Judith, not wishing to publish her wealth abroad, ran into the house to return in a moment with a signed receipt.

"Metje says the count is correct. Do you purpose removing the goods to-day?"

"All that we can," Smathers answered briskly.

"Then here is the key to the storehouse," Judith told him. "I'll set the bars to the inner doors, and you will be free to come and go by the shop

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entrance as you see fit. When all is removed, an you will hang the key on the hook near the door. I will see to it that the place is properly closed once more; but from now on the goods are yours to care for."

"And have you found a messenger to carry your gold?" Smathers inquired a trifle eagerly, looking Tom over the while.

"You had the chance to be of service," Judith told him coldly. "You refused, and so are rid of all responsibility. I bid you good day."

"There's no hard feeling, missy," Smathers muttered as he folded the receipt and stuck it in his cap-band for safe-keeping; then he slouched down the path and out of the gate closely followed by Krumm, who was not content until he saw the man clear of the premises.

"Krumm did not trust him," Judith declared, fondling the hound. "He never left him for a moment, not even to welcome Nan or you, whom he counts his friends."

"I like the man no better," Tom said shortly.

"Nurse Kate thinks that, having paid over the money, he now plans to seize it again," Judith suggested.

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"A good stroke of business for a villain," Tom agreed. "So he would have both goods and gold. That confirms me in my plan. We must trick him, and this is what I propose. We will empty these bags and fill them again with something sufficiently heavy to fool thieves and Nan's Robin as well. Then, if *he* should turn on me, he shall have the spoil after just enough of a fight to satisfy him, and the same with thieves. We will punish them a little and let them escape. They will not stop to examine their booty until they are safe from pursuit; meanwhile you can hide the gold here without risk, and later I will return for it."

"That sounds like a wise plan." Metje already was looking hither and yon for things to fill the bags with.

"I know what we need," cried Judith excitedly, entering into the spirit of the venture. "Those bags of leaden disks in the garret. Fetch them, Metje. I had meant to take them to the storehouse but clean forgot them."

"Better yet, I'll carry the bags to the billets," Metje replied, "while you two hide away the gold. It can go on the steps in the chimney."

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"'Tis the first place any one would look," Judith said discontentedly. "Nay, the pickle-barrel is empty since last week. I'll pack the gold in there."

No sooner said than done, and when Metje returned with her burden she found the two young people going the round of the flower-beds as if nothing unusual were afoot.

"Here," said Judith pointing, "is where all my hopes are centered. Scarce can I wait for spring to see their leaves come up. You know how much the Dutch love flowers and how they prize the tulip above all others? Well, this is a tulip such as was never seen before. I hold it to be a sport, for it came up among these Semper Augustus-plants which it in no way resembles. Should these bulbs here come true I can sell them to one of the great growers in Holland for thousands of guilders."

Tom looked at her in sudden surprise. Within the house was such a store of gold that it had become a danger, yet Judith was talking eagerly as if she coveted more. He had little time to ponder this thought when Nan hailed him from without the gate.

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"Here he is!" she cried triumphantly. "This is my friend Robin. He says he's as ready as another for a little fun and will love the lad who leads him to it."

"Heaven send 't is not the beginning of another unlawful outbreak," Nurse Kate murmured piously, rolling her eyes toward the skies. "Robin is my brother, never will I deny him; yet it would pleasure me greatly if he found joyance in gentler ways."

"Thou wouldst have me take to lace-making and go bird's-nesting when I felt adventurous," Robin laughed as he swaggered through the gate. He was a broad man, and, being in his forties, seemed old to Tom; but there was still a flash of white teeth under his black mustache and a glint of humor in his clear brown eyes. In one ear he wore a gold ring from which a large emerald swung, and he was clad in a sleeveless blue jacket which showed his shirt-sleeves of white silk rolled above his elbows to free his powerful arms. Around his middle was a leathern apron, one end of which was tucked into a red silk belt having a rich gold clasp. Short breeches, fringed, over

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gray wool stockings and rosetted shoes of brown Spanish leather, composed a costume sufficiently incongruous to have attracted attention anywhere except within the town of New Yorke. He was whittling at a great staff as he entered, his knife being a dagger with a gold-inlaid blade and a jeweled hilt. He wore no cap nor hat, and he knuckled his brow politely at sight of Judith.

“Man of mischief though I be in my sister’s eyes,” he said, meeting the girl’s appraising gaze freely and without embarrassment, “I will serve you fairly in this matter, were it only for my little friend’s sake.”

As he spoke he had laid hold on Krumm and fondled him unthinkingly, and Judith’s heart went out to him. This was not her idea of a bloody pirate.

“I know you will,” she said impulsively, while Nan danced for joy to see her friends so friendly.

Tom also had suffered a change of heart at sight of Robin. Pirate this man might have been, but most assuredly he was not one to stick a dagger in a comrade’s back. Now he determined to tell him all of the plan instead of half of it.

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Robin heard him with a thoughtful brow and signified his approval with a great roar of laughter.

"'T is the strategy of a great soldier," he cried. "We could win through with the gold, but in doing so blood might be spilt and—and I care not to call myself to the minds of the authorities."

"I would not have you run into danger on my account," said Judith anxiously.

Again Robin laughed.

"In an affray of this kind, where there is no fear there is no danger." He sheathed his dagger and flourished his staff in his hand. "If you know aught of single-stick, sir, we'll give these knaves a drubbing they will long remember."

"Then think you we are right in our surmises?"

"That there is a plan to take back the purchase money? Aye, that I do! 'T is too usual a stratagem to be called in question. I could tell tales—" He interrupted himself and went on. "The only puzzle is how we can make the capture of the gold plausible."

Once more Robin knit his brow in troubled thought; then his face cleared. "I have it! You, sir, shall pretend a hurt and I will stand by to

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guard you. And now let's be off. For so long have I been tied by promises to my sister's apron that I can scarce wait for the fun that is before us."

"First I must find a good stout stick," Tom suggested.

"Master had staffs enow," Metje volunteered, and went within. She returned in a moment carrying also a long *huik*. "I too have had a thought in this matter," she said. "They expect to see our *Meisje* here carrying part of the gold. Would it not be well if you put this on and befooled them into thinking she was on the road with it?" Invitingly she held out the cloak to Tom, who was just young enough to dislike the thought of going tricked out as a maid and so shrank back with marked distaste.

"Smathers will know me again," he said. "He looked me over well so that there should be no mistake."

"I'll wear it," Robin offered eagerly, with his great roar of laughter. "Faith, I'm a thought large; but I'll go mincingly. See to it that you give me a polite hand in crossing the kennel."

He pulled the hood over his head, hid his staff

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in the folds of his mantle, and picked up one of the bags of metal.

"This is so heavy it might be used as a weapon," he said, with a whistle. "But we must fight delicately in order to disable no one."

"Go out by the back," Judith suggested, "'t is thus I would go were I wishful to be unobserved, and, if things are as we think, a watch will be set there beyond a doubt."

"Moreover," Metje put in, a shade of truculence in her tones, "'t is that way is the loneliest. Along the back of the garden you may have a peaceful fight without fear of interruption."

"Spoken like a wench after my own heart!" Robin exclaimed, with a piercing glance at Metje, who reddened with embarrassment at his praise.

"O Metje!" cried Nan, greatly enjoying Robin's masquerade, "you're neglectful of your mistress. You should carry her burden to the gate, at least."

"In sooth 't is over-heavy for my delicate strength." Robin tried to imitate a fine lady. "To the corner I think you should accompany me. I trust you have my smelling-salts at hand."

"Go you into the house, Judith!" Nan ex-

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claimed, dancing with excitement. "Should you be seen, there will be no deception as to who is hid by that *huik*."

In a great bustle she and Nurse Kate escorted the adventurous party to the back gate and there bade them farewell. But Metje had not returned, and they had scarce reached the house, when a loud outcry warned them that the fray had begun.

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH A BATTLE IS FOUGHT AND
A VICTORY IS WON

WITH the battle opened Judith saw no reason for hiding and ran with the others to the gate, where they heard the rattle of many stout blows ere the sound of the fray died out.

Even then no one returned, and Judith's anxiety grew apace.

"I shall go as far as the corner," she declared, "Metje and—and the others may be killed for all I know. I cannot bear the suspense."

Nan would have gone with her, but this Kate would not allow nor did Judith wish it, so she was prevailed on to wait on the promise that Judith would return at once with news.

Alas, however, for human frailty! No sooner did the girl reach the corner than she too disappeared around it.

Nan cast one indignant glance toward Nurse

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Kate, resenting a restraint that was no longer imposed, for the worthy dame, tucking up her petticoats, had set off in pursuit of Judith.

With a whoop of joy, Nan picked up her little skirts and ran too.

Once the corner was rounded the disappointing fact became evident that the fight was over and a parley was toward.

Tom Lane was stretched on the bank with Judith bending over him. Metje was tightly holding something wrapped about in the *huik*, and Robin was facing two or three men and talking to them heatedly.

"Sorry I am to say it, for ye be well-meaning yokels, I make no doubt; but spoil-sports ye be. Shame on ye! The young gentleman and I had scarce warmed to our work ere ye nipped in on our side. Small hope then that the robbers would stand and take their punishment. The odds were too great—and our plan working to perfection too!"

"If 't was part of your plan to lose the gold, then 't was marvelous well done," one of the newcomers declared sarcastically, the while he nursed a hurt shin. "Your mate there tripped me, or I

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would have had the man in the yellow cap who carried off one bag."

"Give over your quarreling and see what I brought down with no better weapon than the *huik*, which you would have left trailing in the mud of the gutter had I not run to rescue it," called Metje chidingly.

But the men paid her no heed, and it was Nurse Kate who went to her aid.

"What the *Senhor* will say I little like to think," another of the strangers muttered, making a sling of his neckerchief to support a bruised arm.

"I know not your *Senhor* nor care what he thinks," Robin said stoutly, "but I am curious to know whence you had news of what we carried."

"You scarce were so innocent as to suppose Job would be sent upon such an errand unguarded," the first stranger explained impatiently. "We were told that our master's honor would not be satisfied until the gold was placed by the *juffer* with some man of affairs. Till that was done we were responsible. But, finding Smathers had

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sundry hired bravos conveniently near, we kept an eye on them as well."

"Now I am glad," said Judith to nobody in particular, "although I ought to have had no doubt."

"You may be glad, miss," the last of the strangers interrupted sourly, "but we can scarce be brought to rejoice with ye. I tell ye flatly 't is your own men you have to blame for this mishap. Are their reputations all they should be? For, look you, I dare swear that not one but both connived at the escape of the thieves, and I know not how I am to face my master with the news I have for him."

"Well, then," said Metje, who with Nurse Kate's help had set up the bundle she held and now was unswathing its wrappings, "here's a present you may carry to him. Belike, whoever he is, he 'll have ways of rewarding an unfaithful servant."

Blinking and gasping for breath—for Metje, a fine figure of a woman, had thrown the *huik* over his head and then borne him to the ground by sheer weight,—Job Smathers emerged from

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the folds of cloth only to try again to take refuge in the concealment the cloak afforded when he recognized the men talking to Robin; but he was too late. With exclamations of grim satisfaction they pounced upon him.

"With this rascal in hand we 'll find the others. He can be made to peach!" one of them cried exultantly, and Judith felt it in her to be sorry for so sorry a knave when she heard his whimpering appeals for mercy as he fell on his knees before her in the muddy roadway.

"Who," asked Metje suddenly, "is on watch in my kitchen? Fine stewards are we. We may return to find ne'er a *pickle* left."

"Krumm will be on guard," Nan said complacently. "He is faithfuller than we."

But Metje's words had jogged their memories and they made ready in haste to return to the house, while Judith addressed the strangers.

"You have had small thanks for the help you came to give," she said. ("Thanks indeed!" Robin snorted under his breath.) "But I am not unmindful of it and, if you will take a letter to your master for me, I can promise that you will find yourselves freed from blame."

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Not very hopeful that her message would do aught for them, the men too went to the house and were regaled by Metje with ale and *kookies* and much talk; while Judith wrote her letter to Salvador Dacosta, explaining all. She sealed this with her father's signet, pressed down on the hot wax; but Dacosta had enjoined that she forget his name so there was no superscription. Thus she handed it to his men, and noted that they were in no way surprised at the lack of address, but rather that she seemed to rise in their estimation as one who, having been entrusted with a secret, knew how to guard it.

"This shall reach its destination, missy, be sure of that," was all they said on taking leave. They carried with them their miserable prisoner, cringing and protesting at every step; but, once they were gone, it was hard to believe in their very existence, so fantastic did their entrance into the affair seem. Indeed, the others could scarce control their laughter till the men were out of hearing.

"Robin would have me squire him over the stones like the pretty lady he pretended to be," Tom at last began their tale, "and 't was when he

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was enjoying some extra airs and graces that the thieves descended upon us."

"It took me a minute to strip off that *huik*," Robin interpolated, "while one great hairy man, who scared gentle me a'most to death, tugged at my bag of gold. So frightened was he when he saw my pretty face come out from the hood that he went over backward into the muck in the kennel. A moment later he was up and made off—"

"Helped by a good thwack from Robin's staff," Tom interrupted. "Glad I was to see the wretch go, for he took one bag of metal with him."

"There were seven men left," Robin went on, "and I looked for a right merry meeting. It would have done me good, for I lack exercise sorely; but along must come those spoil-sports shouting 'A rescue! A rescue!' to ruin the fun."

"Now then," said Judith, "I do not understand your figures. Surely you said the odds were against the thieves, yet they were seven, the rescuers three, which with you and Master Lane makes five to us—"

"Od zounds!" Robin explained, "count the others as you will, but Master Lane and I could

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not in justice rate ourselves at evens against such scum! I had thought to fight with one hand held behind me in the way of sport."

"Men are men and numbers are numbers," Judith began.

But Nan interrupted, looking at Robin with adoring eyes.

"Nay, I know what Robin means," she said. "Krumm is a dog and so are my mother's sickly spaniels that must sit on a 'ladies' darling' apiece to keep warm, even though my mother and I, lacking foot-stoves, go with cold feet. Think you it would be fair to rate Krumm at evens with such? So it is with men."

"It still remains to take your pickles to market," Tom remarked jocularly, when Nan's explanation had been approved.

"And I can tell you how to do it," Kate said. "Here comes the boy with water from the Tea-water Pump. Hire him to drive the keg in his dog-wagon to the Here van Bursum's counting-house. Robin and Master Lane can walk on the other side of the kennel, and no one will know that they guard aught of worth."

"Judith and I will go too, to see the sport," Nan

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suggested hopefully, but Judith made short work of that idea.

"Judith and you will sit in the office to work at a little Latin that hath been neglected of late," she said sternly, motioning Nan to enter.

"I 'll return with Here van Bursum's receipt," Tom called, in haste.

"Oh!" Judith stayed her steps. "Is that necessary? Can you not keep it for me till another day? Surely am I making you lose too much time from your father's business."

Tom laughed a little dryly at this suggestion.

"I 'm none so anxious to prove zealous and efficient in that business," he confessed. "If I do *too* well, there is danger that I may never be let go back to my studies. Whereas should my father make up his mind that I am not useful to him in his large affairs, he may ship me off to Europe where my heart is."

"If that is your wish, I hope you may get it," Judith told him steadily. "I see Metje has come to terms with the dog-boy, and as you are in no haste, 't is in my mind that I shall set seals upon that keg; thus the Here van Bursum will not need

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to know what it contains in money, nor will he be troubled to count it as otherwise I am sure he would think he must."

She withdrew suddenly into the house, to all seeming intent upon this errand, and soon afterward Robin came out, rolling the pickle-barrel.

"'T is good your dog-wagon is a stout one," he remarked to the boy, "for this rum, if rum it be, hath a body to it to turn men's heads." With an effort he landed it in the cart, winking at Tom to note the humor of his deception. The dog-boy looked Robin over.

"Your rum, if *rum it be*," he said, "is laced, I make no doubt, with richer goods. But let's be off. 'T is naught to me or my team if we carry water from the Tea-water Pump or pirate's treasure. We earn but our just fees." And, in imitation of Robin, he winked at Tom most villainously.

Far from being angered at this, Robin roared with laughter and tweaked the boy's ear good-naturedly.

"Almost thou mindest me of myself at thy age," he declared. "See that thou ledest as

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sweet and gentle a life, so that when thou reachest my years thou wilt be, as I am, a squire of dames and toy-maker to children."

"Well, let's be off," Tom said with a swift glance toward the house, to make sure that Judith and Nan were not returning to wish them God-speed. "Think you we need our staffs?" he asked Robin in an undertone.

"I've little hope that we will," Robin replied. "There's no such luck comes my way as two lawful turn-ups in one day. We'll take them, none the less, for there's the chance that our rescuers may not have been the fools they seemed and may by now suspect that we would have been less ready to be rid of our burdens had they contained aught of value."

"You don't fancy they would turn on us?" Tom asked, astonished at such a suggestion.

"Nay, then," said Robin shrugging his shoulders, "I say no such thing, for I have small expectation of it; but there is a chance that one or t'other among them might like to try a bout with us for the sport of it, if naught more. There was but enough of that little fray just now to whet the appetite." And, hoping against hope

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that they might meet with some new adventure, they set out for Here van Bursum's.

Within the house Nurse Kate was at her knitting and Metje at her wheel, while Judith and Nan labored over lessons on which it was very hard to fix their minds after the recent stirring events.

"Why did you run to Tom, Judith?" Nan asked suddenly. "I had no alarm for him. Did you forget that it was part of the plan that he should feign a wound?"

The older girl colored faintly.

"I saw Metje, busied as I thought in gathering my cloak from the kennel, so I knew that I need fear naught for her; but he, Master Lane—"

"You called him Tom yesterday," Nan reminded her.

"To be sure," said Judith, rallying her forces. "Why not? He is a member now of my own Company. Tom lay there with no one looking after him, so still that I fancied his hurt was real. Common humanity caused me to go to his assistance. I thought he had come by his injury in my service, and there is no way for me to repay him. Now as to Robin, Nan, I should give him a gold piece, should I not?"

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"No, no!" cried Nan indignantly, "you must not wound him so. Robin fights not for hire but for friendship. He will value your thanks more than aught else you can bestow. I know that he hath no need of gold, nor would he accept it."

"Then will I thank him right heartily," Judith declared. "Come, we will give over lessons for to-day. Neither of us is in the mood for them."

"Let us go into the garden," Nan suggested eagerly; "there we can first see Robin returning."

But when the two came they were disconsolate. Nothing at all had happened. The precious keg had been delivered to Here van Bursum at his counting-house where he made himself responsible for its safe keeping. Tom gave Judith the receipt. It was all very flat and uninteresting, and Robin was plunged into melancholy over what might have been but was not.

"What I *should* have done was to have stretched those meddling rescuers!" he exclaimed as if at a sudden discovery. "Then would I have had time to play with the foot-pads as I saw fit."

"Robin, Robin," cried Kate in chiding tones,

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"against my wish our little lady exposed you to this danger. Seize hold on yourself or you will backslide. I know you will."

Robin finding naught to say for himself, a defender appeared for him in the person of Metje.

"Give over harrying the man," she said. "Fighting is man's meat. Wouldst make a milk-sop of thy brother?" She and Nurse Kate, usually the best of friends, now faced each other looking like two fat hens with ruffled feathers, and Judith hastened to interpose to save hard words between them.

"Indeed the responsibility is all mine," she declared. "It was in my defense Robin acted and I cannot thank him enough for his help." She gave him her hand prettily, whereat Robin reddened like a blushing maiden but looked vastly pleased withal.

Shortly thereafter Nan started home, taking the brother and sister with her, but Tom still lingered. He had little to say seemingly, and at last Judith broke a rather oppressive silence to ask openly what he stayed for if he were not minded for conversation.

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"I waited to be thanked as sweetly as was Robin," he declared, with an attempt at lightness which Judith parried readily.

"You know you have my gratitude," she told him.

"I also waited to ask—" he began; then stopped at a loss for words. "Nothing!" he ended and flung out of the gate and away, throwing back over his shoulder the words: "I leave town to-morrow on my father's business."

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH A NOBLE DAME SEEKS SYMPATHY AND AID

JUDITH, somewhat astray in her mind for the explanation of Tom's brusqueness, went within to pick up certain fag ends of womanish work which had been sadly neglected while she was about the task of closing out her father's business; but she had hardly started when she heard the rolling of a coach, and a liveried footman, closely escorted by Krumm, who sniffed suspiciously at his silken elegance, ran up the walk to knock a thundering roll upon the door.

"Save us," cried Metje, "'t is no other than the Governor's lady! Think you she means to visit here or hath she gone astray?"

"My heart misgives me that she means to honor me," Judith said.

"An we do not answer, most like she will drive away and forget us," Metje suggested.

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"Go to the door and speak to the lackey," Judith commanded, with a foot on the stair. "I will smooth my hair and be ready to meet the lady as she enters. She would but come again another time."

Lady Bellomont, a lackey standing obsequiously at either side of the open gate, came up the path in haste and entered with a considerable show of excitement, Judith, in accordance with Dutch etiquette, giving her greeting at the threshold.

"What's this, I hear? What's this?" the noble lady demanded, scarce troubling to notice the young girl's salutation.

"I pray your ladyship will enter the great chamber and be seated," Judith said, for her visitor was sweeping from end to end of the *voorhuis* with her robe flying, till the patterns Metje had sanded there were scattered, and the sand was laid in swaths along the floor.

"Why do you not answer me, miss?" Lady Bellomont rapped out. "Adzooks! Am I never to have a straight answer to a plain question?"

"In truth, Lady Bellomont, I know not what

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it is you wish to know," Judith replied, with a dignity unusual in so young a girl, "but there is naught I have any interest in concealing; therefore you may rest assured that I will answer to the best of my ability whatever it may please you to ask."

This assurance seemed to calm Lady Bellomont, for she drew out a chair from the table and seated herself.

"Here then is the case," she said. "'T is a well-known fact that Captain Giles Shelley, the buccaneer, hid on our shores a vast treasure that hath never been recovered. To-day the boy from the Tea-water pump drove his dogs through the town, boasting at every door that he had carried a pirate treasure from this house."

"The boy lied," Judith said shortly.

"Say not so!" Lady Bellomont's pretty face darkened. "I want not to lose my good opinion of you. There were many who saw the man who guarded it. A burly ruffian with a jeweled earring."

"True enough," Judith agreed, and "true it was that that man was engaged in guarding a

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treasure, but it was no fabulous pirate hoard. Only the sum of money paid me for the goods in my father's storehouse."

"Eh, then," interrupted Lady Bellomont, quick to seize on any hope of profit, "how much was that? Surely there are death dues and charges against it for the state that should be given over into the hands of my lord."

"Rest assured that whatever is lawful will be dispensed by the Here van Bursum to whose good offices it was consigned," Judith said steadily.

At this her ladyship was at small pains to conceal her annoyance, and jumped to her feet to resume her nervous walk up and down the *voorhuis*.

"Perchance," she said at last, hope springing again in her breast, "this treasure you speak of is not the one the lad meant."

"But it was, your Excellency," Judith declared. "There was no other, I'm sure; for scarce would the boy be hired to carry two such loads in one day. He but invented a likely tale of pirates, or believed it himself, perchance."

"A pox on him! He should be whipped for a

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little liar," said her ladyship hotly; then once more her temper seemed to cool and she resumed her seat at the table.

"Hast never been beyond this province?" she asked. Judith shook her head.

"I die for London," her visitor murmured. "My lord is so busied with his office, and so bitter in his war against the Madagascar trade, that he hath estranged all the gentles, leaving me friendless and alone. It was my purpose, had there been a treasure, to demand a share in it for the finder's protection. With money in hand, I could induce my husband to give up his post here and return to England; I know I could."

Tears rolled down her cheeks.

"I pine and sicken for my home," she sobbed. "Look at my hands, so thin that almost you can see through them. Think you my heart is stouter? I tell you that in this hateful country my end is near. I must go home! I must!"

Judith was moved and surprised by this sudden confidence from one whom she hardly knew.

"'T is sad that you are not happy here," she said gently. "I would I could help you."

"Would you an you could?" Lady Bellomont

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asked quickly, "for truly I fear I shall go mad in this wilderness, who am used to all the pleasures and luxuries of London-town. I ask you, would you an you could?"

"That I would," Judith assured her heartily.

"Then demand of this man of yours if he hath knowledge of any hidden hoard? He was a pirate once, you can't deny it, and such men hold strange secrets."

"But why should he not seek out the treasure for himself, in such case?" Judith inquired reasonably.

"He might lack a boat—helpers he could trust. I know not! At least promise you will ask him."

"That I can do," Judith promised, and the noble lady took her leave, her romantic fancy already busy with dreams of what she would do if she were mistress of a vast treasure.

Judith resumed her seat at the table to review what had just passed, but found herself unable to fix her mind on the matter. Instead, a wave of self-pity overwhelmed her. Here she was, an orphan, alone in the city, at the mercy of robbers who plotted to seize her wealth, with but one faint chance of carrying out her father's com-

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mands without sacrificing herself; with no relatives she could turn to, few if any friends—

“Oh, *wae*, Judith Van Taarl,” she broke the thread of her own thoughts to speak aloud. “What’s wrong with thee? I think thou must be ill. Never before in thy long life hast thou felt like this. Get thee to Metje and perchance she can physick thee ere ’t is too late.”

With faltering steps she made her way to the kitchen, where a most savory smell greeted her.

“I had planned,” said Metje, stirring a pot busily, “to keep my ear glued to the keyhole, that I might be able in future to tell my posterity how the great ones of this world discourse; but there was that within me that would not be stilled.”

“Your conscience,” Judith murmured, white to the lips.

“Nay,” said Metje, “’t was more serious still than that. It was a terrible feeling, such as in all my life I had not had before.”

“O Metje,” cried Judith, “is it a catching sickness? For I too am suddenly seized by a vast emptiness, an awful goneness here.” She placed a pretty hand on the pit of her stomach and looked to Metje for sympathy.

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"'T is the same disease," Metje nodded. "A tidbit here and a tidbit there have eased my troubles mightily, and soon, I can promise you, you will be quite recovered; for to-night we sup not on bread and cheese but on the best Metje can set before you, and early, too, for all is ready now to dish up. Know you not, my pet lamb, that no bite nor sup hath passed your lips this day since breakfast-time, so busied have you been?"

Then a light dawned upon Judith.

"And is this hateful feeling hunger," she cried, "and naught more? O Metje, hast fed Krumm? I would not have him suffer so."

"He's fed and all is ready for our service," Metje assured her. "Let's to table. You carry the lobster. I'll take the lamprey-pie and the fricassee of chicken and return for the rest. The sooner you put food in your stomach, the sooner will the world wag well again."

Their meal began almost in silence; but when the first great hunger was appeased they found time to talk over the events of the day.

"Think you you got all you should have for your stores?" Metje asked. "A sale by the

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candle sometimes brings great returns, if the people grow heated in bidding against each other."

"I am content," Judith replied. "I made by it more than my father expected. But let us not forget to call off the vendue criers to-morrow. I want no disappointed bargain-hunters at our door."

"I'll attend to it ere you wake," Metje returned. "Save us! Who's that would enter here to-night? Hark to Krumm barking. He'll have the man in pieces."

Together they ran to the door to call Krumm off the visitor.

CHAPTER X

IN WHICH VISITORS ARRIVE FROM PATRIA

“**S**UCH a wild beast should not be let live!” These were the words Judith heard as Metje opened the door, uttered in high complaining tones that echoed in her memory along with a very different voice, saying, “Your need of haste is more urgent than you know.”

“I will dispose of him to-morrow,” a man made answer, and as the door opened a crack this speaker set his foot against it and pushed it in quickly. Metje and Judith stepping aside hastily to make way for the visitor, for well they knew who was come.

“This is Judith?” the Here de Heem said coldly, as he entered. “You have grown, as was to be expected, but I should have known you again.”

“Judith, my dear dead brother’s only child,” sobbed the lady who followed him. “’T is a sad

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home-coming, my love," and, still weeping, she fell upon Judith's neck and clung there.

Metje smiled grimly at this exhibition, recalling full well the many differences in the old days between this flabby, lacrimose lady and her forthright stepbrother; but when she spoke it was civilly enough.

"Let me take your wraps and bundles. The supper is still upon the table. 'T would be well to eat it ere it is cold."

"Supper!" sniffed Moeye Beletje, "that is like you, Metje; but how can I think of food and my heart aching?"

None the less she released Judith and stepped briskly toward the table, only turning back to say, "Welcome Carolus as he should be welcomed, my dear. I assure you he hath been longing for this meeting through all our weary journey."

At her words, Carolus de Heem, who had stayed his steps just within the doorway and was taking in the scene with quick-glancing, ironical eyes, stepped forward to salute the girl; but she avoided him politely enough by dropping a curtesy and saying formally, "You are welcome to

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Yorke," the while she thought resentfully, "I might have been spared this intrusion."

Her lack of enthusiasm had been noted at once by the elder De Heem, who shrugged his shoulders behind her back as Judith pressed them all to draw up to the table and regale themselves, while she and Metje went above stairs to lay out well-aired sheets and prepare their rooms for occupancy.

"It seems to me the Juffrouw Van Taarl hath more spirit than you credited her with," Carolus said when she was out of hearing. "This is no meek maiden, or my eyes deceive me."

"Her aunt will have a word with her to-morrow," his father assured him.

"Nay," protested the Vrouw de Heem, her mouth full of pie, "'t is always *I* am that am set to do the distasteful things."

"There's naught distasteful about this," Here de Heem hastened to point out, seeing his wife again upon the brink of tears. "Any girl should be glad to clear her father's name and wed a personable young man to boot."

"Do they always live like this in the New World?" Carolus asked, helping himself liberally

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to pigeons and buttered ale. "'T is rich fare."

"'T is rank extravagance," his father said, looking from one to another of the delectable dishes on the table. "Your mother to-morrow must take a hand in the housekeeping."

"'T is useless to ask me," his wife blubbered. "Judith, being young, I can handle mayhap; but Metje, never! She would laugh in my face."

"Then she must go," De Heem declared. "I will not have an insolent servant in my house."

"In Holland, where you are known, you can carry things like that with a high hand," his wife plucked up spirit to say, "but you are forgetting that we Dutch threw away this province. It is English, and these English have a rare idea of justice."

"My mother is right, sir," Carolus said, for so he named his father's wife, while she stroked his hand furtively under the cloth. Indeed if there was one thing Vrouw de Heem loved it was this stepson, who was hers through her late marriage. "'T is ever more prudential not to stir up enmity. What will a little extra butter and spice matter in the long run?"

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"True enough, I am not playing for counters in this game; but I like not such lavishness," De Heem grumbled; and Metje, setting her foot on the stair above, overheard him and at once took the matter up.

"You will have no cause to complain of it again," she told him gruffly. "Our usual supper is bread and cheese; but to-day we had neither dinner nor piece, a fact that you are profiting by," and she passed out of the *voorhuis* into the kitchen without giving him time to reply.

"That is a most 'tankerous woman," he said, aggrievedly. "I am overruled, but an I had my way I 'd be rid of her at any cost."

Judith now came downstairs to take her place at the head of the table and act the hostess, which she did prettily enough, albeit she had little heart in it.

"I know not how one feels when coming off a ship," she remarked, "but if indeed you have finished your meal, your beds are ready should you wish to retire. For my part, I have had a long and taxing day of it and should be glad of a little rest." She bent her head and said the short grace after meat that was customary and then

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stood awaiting her guests' pleasure; but, such was the force of her desire to be rid of them for the time, that almost against their wills, they found themselves ushered to their rooms.

Vrouw de Heem walked at once to the door of Judith's chamber, but the girl stayed her with her hand on the latch.

"That is my room now, Moeye Beletje," she said, "I think you and the Here de Heem will find as great comfort in the side-chamber. Your son I have put in the room above the office, which has recently had new curtains and a drugget on the floor."

"It would be more fitting that I had my old chamber and your uncle the Master's bed in the *voorhuis*," Vrouw de Heem grumbled.

"There is no bed in the *voorhuis* now, nor ever will be again," Judith answered calmly. "I trust you will all sleep well; but, should you want for anything, Metje rests in a trundle-bed in my chamber, and a call will bring her to you. Once more, sleep well." She entered her own room and closed the door behind her.

Carolus followed his father and mother into their apartment and there laughed long if silently.

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"I see naught to laugh at," grumbled Here de Heem. "Here I am sent off to bed like a naughty child without a smoke or a glass of schnapps."

"'T is that I 'm laughing at," Carolus grinned. "We are *all* sent off to bed by this half-grown girl, who was to be as wax in your hands. For my part I am rejoiced. Her show of spirit likes me well."

"There is no reason you should not love her," his stepmother said eagerly, "and she, you. 'T is on that that I base my hopes."

Carolus patted her on the shoulder indulgently.

"Let us see what to-morrow will bring forth," he suggested enigmatically, and went off to bed.

Metje, below stairs, was setting everything away when Judith reopened her door and slipped down to help her.

"O Metje," she murmured, "however are we going to stand it? How long do you suppose they intend to stay?"

She held an answer to that question which Metje could not supply, but it was a help to talk to some one sympathetic.

Metje shrugged her shoulders.

"This is a cheap inn, but it shall not be too

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good; for at last am I in favor of your economies. The Here de Heem holds that you are extravagant, does he? We'll show him!" she snorted indignantly.

"But we cannot be inhospitable, Metje. Think of the shame if they left my roof and went to stop at the City Tavern?"

"No danger," Metje scoffed, "I remember Here de Heem of old. A florin to him was so big it would cover the moon."

"This then we can do," Judith said thoughtfully: "we can feed them as plainly as my station will allow. And I must harden my heart to withstand certain pressure I foresee they mean to put upon me. This house was never my father's save in courtesy. Here I am mistress, and mistress I purpose to remain."

"That is well said. See that you hold to it, but it will be hard for you to resist your aunt's complainings. Also must we have a care of Krumm. They like him not."

"My dog!" Judith cried, stiffening at the thought. "Come! Let's to bed. We'll soon see how I can meet them on that point."

All being in order, the kitchen embers covered

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with ashes and the lights out, the two groped their way to the stair and so to bed.

They were up in the morning bright and early, but not so early as to be ahead of the Here de Heem, whom they found fuming at the door, where, sure enough, the first thing he mentioned was Krumm.

"This brute must be disposed of, Judith," he said, hardly returning the girl's salutation. "I cannot have him at large about the place."

Judith opened her eyes a little at such arrogance but, determined not to begin the battle she foresaw, replied politely.

"Do you not think him a good watch-dog? I know he let you enter last night, but the outer gate had not been locked or you could never have passed him."

"'T is not that he let me in that I complain of; rather that this morning he will not let me out," Here de Heem replied. "Moreover, your aunt hath delicate sensibilities and cannot bear such a great beast rushing at her. He must be got rid of. On that point I am determined."

"I'm sorry to refuse your request"—Judith spoke quietly,—“but I consider Krumm necessary

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for our protection. I cannot, nor will I, part with him. I can promise you, however, that he will not annoy my aunt. He is used to women-folk and gentle with them."

She opened the door as she spoke and the hound came at once for his morning greeting, gamboling like a puppy at sight of her.

Bringing him close to Here de Heem and taking a fold of his coat in her hand, she held it to Krumm's nose.

"He may come and go, Krumm," she said. "He may come and go, sir," and the beast seemed to understand her, for when De Heem started down the path he bared his teeth but made no effort to stay him.

"Now, good dog, we'll get your breakfast." Judith moved toward the kitchen door.

"It might be as well that I make friends with him," Here de Heem suggested, pausing on his way to the gate, "so let me feed him; if the brute is to stay, that is."

"Be a friend to him and he will be a friend to you," Judith smiled, elated at her little victory. "But he is trained to eat from no hand save Metje's or mine. There's always a chance that

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made ready the board. Shall I take it to his chamber?"

"No, no!" the vrouw answered hurriedly. "'T is my joy to wait upon him." She looked down at the meager contents of the tray with considerable irritation. "Have you no pounded sugar to go with the suppawn? This is beggar's fare you offer your guests."

"There is pounded sugar," Judith hastened to assure her, lest Metje deny her even that. "Metje has put maple-sugar on the tray because we prefer it to white; but I will add a little of that too, in case the Jonchere de Heem likes not the flavor of our wild sugar."

This done, Vrouw de Heem took up the tray and waddled off with it soon to come back wreathed in smiles.

"He likes well the maple-sugar," she announced proudly. "He wonders why we serve no suppawn in Patria. He thinks the milk much wholesomer than *jogolato*. Also he hath slept sweetly and hath a brave appetite."

"Now that is right good news," said Metje ironically, while Judith looked up, surprised. She had expected complaints from Carolus.

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She was not disappointed of her complaints, however, when Here de Heem returned and they sat down to table. He was in a most villainous temper, liked naught that was set before him. and, making but half a meal, pushed back his chair and demanded an immediate interview with Judith.

"Already I have told myself that I have much that must be made plain to you," the girl said steadily. "Mayhap you will walk in the garden and enjoy a smoke while I help clear away. Then I will be at your service."

"I am in no mind to be kept waiting," Here de Heem snarled. "'Tis your housework must wait. Or your aunt can give your woman a hand, if help she needs must have."

"If there is such urgent haste," Judith said gravely, "my work assuredly can wait; but I desire that my aunt shall be present at our interview. To my thinking she is as deeply concerned in it as you or I."

Carolus, coming down the stairs with a chess-board under his arm, heard these words with amusement. Assuredly this little provincial had spirit.

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"I'll not go a step unless Carolus comes too," the Vrouw de Heem quavered, holding out a hand to her favorite, who took it and patted it reassuringly.

"Any one more useless than I at a business conference it would be hard to find," he said, "but, if I may spread out my board on a table in some corner, I have a problem to work on and will try to be in no one's way." He looked at Judith as he spoke. The girl made no protest. His presence or absence was a matter of utter indifference to her; so he sauntered after them into the office and, establishing himself at one end of the room, set a number of carved and jeweled chessmen before him and soon seemed deep in his problem.

Here de Heem, however, could hardly wait to see them all seated ere he burst into angry speech.

"What, may I ask, is the meaning of the news that met me this morning? I was greeted by an old friend near the Whitehall who told me there was great gossip in the town of a mad will your father left expressly cutting us off from the management of your affairs?"

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Carolus's hand, hovering over his board with a pawn in it, remained poised in the air a moment: then the pawn was quietly set in place and he seemed sunk in contemplation of his next move. His stepmother, her chair pushed as near his as possible, watched him with dotting eyes; but the other two, the contest well begun, had no thought for aught else.

"My father made a will expressly freeing me from the control of the Lords Orphan Masters," said Judith. "There was no mention of you in the matter, and no slight intended."

"In that case," Here de Heem strove to speak amicably, "you will naturally move to have the will set aside and to have us appointed your guardians under the law."

Judith hesitated. Here was a suggestion hard to parry without offense.

"I must thank you for your kind interest in my affairs," she said at length, "but it is too late. Already have I taken over the ordering of my own business."

"That was a mistake, but one that there is still time to rectify," De Heem declared. "Doubtless your father hesitated to call me from Europe;

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but, now that I am here, he would wish me to direct you. That you can readily understand."

Again Judith was slow in answering. She preferred not to be brutally direct if it could be avoided.

"My father gave me very exact instructions," she said at last, "which I am carrying out to the best of my ability."

"To the best of your ability!" Here de Heem laughed slightly. "There you have said it. How could you, an inexperienced maiden, be expected to have the ability to sell your father's rich stores and possessions?"

"But I have sold them," Judith murmured. (How she longed for even Metje's friendly support at that moment no one can ever know.)

Here de Heem jumped to his feet angrily, sending his chair over backward with a crash.

"You have disposed of all the goods?" he shouted. "Was there ever such madness? This matter must be looked into. Has aught been removed from the premises yet?"

"I think not," Judith acknowledged. "I've been listening for the carriers and have heard nothing."

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"Then," said Here de Heem, rubbing his hands, "it is not too late, it will be easy enough, in view of your age, to have this bargain set aside. We shall refuse admittance to any attempting to take aught away. Carolus, leave your game. You may be of use here."

But Carolus still puzzled over his chess-board as if he had not heard, and it was Judith who stayed De Heem's bustling progress toward the door.

"I have no wish or intention of breaking my bargain," she declared; and her aunt gave a little moan of protest at such a defiance. "I sold for more than my father told me I could expect, and I have been paid in full in good, broad pieces. What possible complaint have I?"

Here de Heem stopped in his tracks, his mouth opening and shutting like that of a fish out of water and his eyes bulging like a hooked cod's.

"Where, then, is this great sum of money?" he gasped.

"In the care of the Here van Bursum," Judith told him shortly.

At the end of the room Carolus rose and stretched himself delicately like a cat; indeed all

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his movements were graceful, and he was dark and slender, more like a Frenchman than a Dutch burgher.

“Check!” he said to his mother in an undertone, pointing to his chess-board, while she smiled fondly at his success.

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH A CHESS PROBLEM REMAINETH
UNSOLVED

NO one but his stepmother heeding, Carolus sat down and once more puzzled over his pieces.

“Now it is indeed time that we came to an understanding,” said De Heem. “If you know it not, let me tell you that the loss of the *Great Mogul* left your father in debt to my wife and me for the amount of the moneys he had urged us to advance. This was a modest fortune, and not one *stuyver* of it had been repaid at the time of your father’s fatal attack. Therefore”—he drew a long breath,—“the gold you speak of is *mine*, and I demand that you at once give me an order on the Here van Bursum for it.”

For a space Judith’s determination wavered, and her hesitancy was evident in her attitude. Her disposition was impetuous, and it would have been a great weight off her mind to be rid of these

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creditors. There was, she felt sure, enough money in the Here van Bursum's care to buy her release from this man's presence if she bargained with him shrewdly; but such had not been her dying father's commands. Considering her course, she stood in momentary silence, only glancing up when the sense of eyes upon her drew her gaze. Carolus was looking fixedly across his chess-board at her, and, as his eyes met hers, he shook his head gravely.

"I do not think that a wise move," he said. "Nothing would be gained by it."

"What move do you speak of, Carolus?" De Heem asked impatiently. "You know naught of this matter."

Carolus opened wide his eyes as if in amazement.

"Assuredly not, sir," he replied. "I know less than naught of business. I spoke of my problem on the board here. If I throw away *this* piece I get in exchange *that*. But what will it profit me when the balance is still against me? My chess-master told me that, with skill, white, which seems the weaker here, should mate in eight moves due to superior position—"

A CHESS PROBLEM UNSOLVED

"Give over your chattering," his father said impatiently. "There is business toward."

Leaving his pieces where they lay, Carolus got up and lounged out of the room, saying mildly over his shoulder as he went:

"I warned you I was of no use in such cases."

Even his mother made no effort to stop him, and De Heem, looking in the inkwell to make sure it was filled, pushed it toward Judith and trimmed her a pen.

"Write me the order," he commanded. But Judith had had time to think. What had been Salvador Dacosta's words? "There are two sorts of fools, one who pays too late and one who pays too soon."

Her mind now fully made up, she set the pen back on the rack.

"It is my intention that you should be paid," she said, "all in good time. But there is, as you know, a period allowed for the settlement of an estate. At the end of that all creditors receive their just proportion."

"Then it is your idea that your father died a bankrupt, unable to pay his lawful debts in full—a thief protected only by our too lenient laws?"

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Judith flushed deeply at these words, and her aunt began to sob into her handkerchief.

"Why should you wish to pay strangers before your own kith and kin?" she whimpered. "I should think it would pleasure you greatly to do as your Oom Claes desires."

"Lest there be any misunderstanding," Judith returned, "let me make myself clear to you. I intend to pay all my father owes, even as he would have done had he lived. No one shall be able to cast a slur upon his good name. In all the years he traded from this port no one was a *guilder* the worse for dealing with him. 'Honest Van Taarl' he was called. Honest Van Taarl he lived and died. Think you his daughter would see his good name smirched after his death? I'd die myself first!"

Here de Heem paid no attention to this outburst, his thoughts still busy over Judith's possessions.

"What else of value had your father?" he asked, "and how quickly can all be converted into money? I have no desire to spend my life in this wilderness. First there's this house. We

A CHESS PROBLEM UNSOLVED

might, perchance, take it in partial payment of our claims."

Judith rose, determined to make an end of the matter.

"You can go home when you wish," she said coldly. "When the time allowed is up, if I have failed to pay every *stuyver* my father owed, then may an inquisition be made into his affairs to see if there is aught unaccounted for. As to this house, it is mine nor ever was my father's."

"And pray," De Heem said suspiciously, "how can that be? This is some cunning jobbery to keep valuables out of the accounting."

Judith's lip curled at this unworthy suspicion.

"Were it in my power to sell it," she declared, "I would not grudge even the roof over my head, but this house was strictly entailed by my mother's father. I regret that you must reconcile yourselves to being my guests even as my own father was."

She started to go out; then paused for a moment on the threshold.

"I can promise you only short commons here; for, until all is paid, I purpose keeping expenses

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at the minimum. You will have your coin as surely whether you go or stay. Why do you not return to Patria?"

De Heem stared at her appraisingly; then burst into a sardonic laugh.

"You look only on one side of the picture," he said. "Here then is the other. Your father begged our money for this great venture, vowing there was no risk. Believing him, I advanced too much for our means. You have a care for the honor of your father, dead. I have a care for the honor of Claes de Heem, living. I shall not go back to Holland until I can look those who trusted me in the face and pay them every guilder I owe them. Indeed I have not the passage money an I wished to go."

Vrouw de Heem's eyes widened as he talked. Now she cast her apron over her head and blubbered."

"Oh, *wae, wae!*" she sobbed. "Where did Carolus go? Bid him come to me. Never did you tell us this before."

"Nor should I have told you now had it not been necessary to make things plain to this stiff-necked *meisje*," said De Heem spitefully; "and I

A CHESS PROBLEM UNSOLVED

forbid you both to mention it to Carolus. When we are paid, as I mean to see we are, there will be naught to weep over ; and then, and then only, will you be rid of us."

"You are forgetting," his wife gulped, as Judith left them alone together, "the other plan, about which letters passed between my brother and me."

"I forget nothing," said her husband, "but I must see my way clear before I broach that plan. Meanwhile for once thy slobbering has served its purpose. Judith will hardly doubt that we are at the end of our resources."

"And are we not?" asked his wife, mopping her eyes diligently.

"Had you the brains of a flea, which I am told can be roomily lodged on the point of a pin, you would know that we are not. But 't is a wise precaution to make her think we have empty pockets ; so say nothing to warn her to the contrary. And now get you to the kitchen and cajole Metje into heating up what was left of last night's pie. An I do not stow something within my stomach soon, I am like to murder yon handsome spitfire ere dinner is done."

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Meanwhile Judith had gone to the garden to find Nan busy with her lesson and Carolus marching up and down the path in the sun, Krumm at his side. She watched him a trifle maliciously, expecting him to be made nervous by such close attendance; and Nan, looking up, read her face.

"There's no fun to be got out of him," she said. "He loveth Krumm. He said he had a dog like to him once, Henri Quatre by name."

"Art sure it was not a lap-dog like Mistress Homan's?" Judith laughed, not able to keep a certain contempt out of her tone.

"Don't you like your cousin?" asked Nan in surprise. "He is a very pretty gentleman. Prettier even than Tom Lane."

"Oh," Judith returned vaguely, "I don't know. I don't think I ever looked at him."

"He has looked at you," Nan said. "When you were in the office I came within, seeking for you, and he scarce took his eyes from your face for all he pretended to be playing with his chess-board."

"Nonsense!" said Judith, unaccountably annoyed at the child's babble. "Set to your lesson, Nan, or you'll never have done."

A CHESS PROBLEM UNSOLVED

"It is no nonsense," the child averred stoutly, "for I asked him if he did n't think you were very pretty, and he said you were the first red Indian ever he had met and he would not fail to let me know his decisions concerning you when he had studied you sufficiently to form an opinion. So you see he *was* studying you. He thought I was a red Indian too, but I told him right quickly that I was English, and you were not at all like any of the *wilden* ever I saw. I thought that you were Dutch, but remembering that he was your cousin I minded my manners and did not contradict him."

"He is not my cousin, Nan, nor will he ever know aught about me," Judith declared haughtily.

"Now I am sure you do not like him," Nan cried, "but I do, and Robin will too."

"How is Robin?" Judith asked, to change the subject.

"He's well," the child said, "although I fear I did wrong to let him engage himself in the strife of yesterday. Robin hath such a love of adventure in his blood that once 't is started boiling is hard to stay till it hath boiled over and put out the fire."

"I would greatly regret that he fell into bad

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ways because of me," Judith said. "Is there naught I can do to hold him back?"

"You talked of wanting a man to work among the flowers and vegetables," Nan returned. "Now I knew it not before, but Robin hath a great love for flowers. When he heard you had need of such a man he asked me to speak for him for the place. It is not money he needs but occupation; at least that is what he said."

"Tell Nurse Kate to send him to me. Work would at least be this much help that he would have less time for mischief," Judith said readily, thinking also that here would be her chance to fulfil her useless promise to the Governor's lady.

"Oh, he's ever busy," Nan told her. "He makes boats for the boys and toys for all of us. But he will come at once I know."

Robin, sent by Nan, presented himself at the kitchen door that afternoon before dusk. Metje could scarce believe her eyes, so great was the change in him. Gone were his mustache, his ear-ring, and the other remnants of pirate finery. Instead he wore a clean linen *paltrok*, broad breeches of fustian, and well darned stockings

A CHESS PROBLEM UNSOLVED

thrust into wooden shoes, all such as any boor laboring by the day for his bread might wear.

"Save us!" cried Metje when she had made out who he was. "Almost ye look like a Christian and not a bloodthirsty sea-robber." But her tone was more than a little disappointed, and Robin laughed understandingly.

"This garb smacks less of adventure," said he, "yet, for the present, 't is safer. My sister hath the right of it when she tells me I am not content unless I thrust my neck within the noose. I could have gone with the young master the other day and enjoyed the fun of the play without any need to trick myself out like a gentleman rover. Yet, if I had not, perchance you would never have looked twice my way."

"Take that for your sauce!" cried Metje, outraged, bestowing a ringing box on his ear. "Who is there bold enough to say I looked at you at all?"

"Not I, forsooth," Robin ruefully rubbed the side of his head, "but, if you did n't look at me others did; for my Lady Bellomont hath lost no time in ordering that I be found and brought to the Governor's mansion. Such being the case,

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Robin Marrow sailed with the tide this morning on the flute-ship *Angel of Peace* for Boston town and the Maine. I am Simon Gobbet, an it please you, come to ask the *Juffer* for a little honest work."

"Simon Gobbet," sniffed Metje, "'t is a name suits ye fine. Simple Simon, I shall tell the *meisje*, waits upon her."

She flounced out of the room while Robin sat touching his ear tenderly as if he liked to make sure it still grew beside his face.

Metje found her young mistress in the *voorhuis* engaged in another controversy with Here de Heem, and so waited politely within the door till such time as she should receive permission to speak.

"In fine," De Heem was saying. "'t is plain that a chit of a girl cannot be capable of carrying on such great affairs. This you have proved, having already, doubtless, lost us much money by your hasty and ill-considered action in selling out the stores. Wherefore I have determined to lay in a stock of goods on credit to reopen the business of the Sign of the Barrel and Bale. Be so

A CHESS PROBLEM UNSOLVED

good as to pass over the keys of the store and the office to me."

For a moment Judith stood fingering her chatelaine. Then she went to the office door and locked it, not defiantly but with quiet determination; and, equally quietly, she turned and faced her visitor.

"I regret," she began in a voice that trembled slightly, "to seem ever in opposition to you. My instructions from my father leave me no choice. Had it not been for his express orders I could doubtless have sold the good-will here for something substantial; but he commanded the business closed. Closed it is, and so it shall stay."

"Your father, when he gave such commands, did not consider the possibility of my coming here," Here de Heem began.

"Please!" Judith held up her hand. "He considered—everything!" She turned from him with decision. "What is it, Metje?"

"A gardener is here to speak to you, *meisje*, Simple Simon, by name."

"You will excuse—" The girl followed Metje from the room. "Was it but a device to get me

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away?" she whispered. "I know no Simple Simon."

"Indeed, no," Metje sniffed. "'T is that great oaf, Robin. He claims her ladyship hath runners looking for him, so 't is needful to conceal his name and station. 'T is to a certainty a huge lie; but, as in duty bound, I tell it you as he told me."

"Nay, then," Judith spoke anxiously, "I fear it is no lie, but let's to Robin."

They found him on the kitchen *stoep* still lovingly fingering his ear.

"What is it, Robin?" Judith demanded, anxious for news of Lady Bellomont's plans.

"Something buzzed by my ear," he spoke as a man with a grievance, "and stung it sorely. Faith, it still rings as if a whole swarm were loose in my head."

"'T was naught but a bee," Judith suggested. "They are busy at the hives along the house, now that spring is almost here."

"Perchance you're right," Robin conceded meekly, avoiding Metje's truculent eyes, "but why should it pick on me, who had not tried to steal its honey?"

A CHESS PROBLEM UNSOLVED

Metje greeted this with a great clatter of coppers and frying-pans, intended to assure him that she had heard none of his remarks, and Judith hastened to turn his mind from what she thought a very trivial injury for a bold buccaneer to make such a to-do over.

"Tell me what leads you to think you are wanted at the Governor's house?" she questioned.

"There's no doubt of it," Robin returned readily. "One of the runners was a messmate of mine. He came in haste to warn me to be off, so I signed on the flute-ship and am now well out of sight of land, as her ladyship will have heard. This man you see before you is Simon Gobbet, honest yeoman, at your service."

"Simpleton Gobbet," came a mutter from within the kitchen. "Faith, it will be easy to call him that. It fits him to a T."

Judith suppressed a smile, and so perchance did Robin.

"Know you why her ladyship sent in search of you?" the girl asked anxiously.

"I do not know, but I can guess," Robin said. "We none of us scorn wealth, but thank the Lord there be none in my rank of life so careless how

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they get it as are those in high places. An honest pirate must hide well his hard-won takings, else will he be robbed of all he hath set aside for his old age. Doubtless that prating dog-boy blabbed of what he carted. Thinking it mine, her ladyship sought to share with me or else, with eyes upturned to Heaven, to seize all for the state."

"But, Robin," Judith suggested, "if perchance there is a reward for your capture—"

"I'm safe enough. The scent is lost, I'm sure. Measuring well the length of his tongue, I had the dog-boy carry my sea-chest to the water's edge to be taken aboard the *Angel of Peace*." Robin winked prodigiously, relishing his own cunning. "He'll spread the news abroad."

When Judith would have protested further, he silenced her with a great show of bravado.

"A man is only happy when he smells danger. The thought of it sends his blood coursing through his veins; but, an you would have me safe from harm, I pray you give me work. My best friend would not know me behind a spade."

So it arranged itself, and soon it seemed that

A CHESS PROBLEM UNSOLVED

Simon had always been a part of their household.

He was trimming some bushes near the *stoep* one day when the elder De Heem, fresh from a disagreement with Judith, came down the steps and blundered into him at the turn. Without so much as a glance at the boor, De Heem cursed him for a clumsy hind and went on his way; but Robin straightened up and looked after him in surprise.

“Now that,” he said, scratching his head, “is a face I little thought to see again. But was I not clever when I said none would know me at such work?”

CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH A LADY GROWS IMPATIENT

ONE afternoon Tom Lane, who had been in New England on an errand for his father for the week after the De Heems' coming and hence knew nothing of the arrivals from Patria, hurried to the house full of a strange adventure. He knocked hastily and, impatient of delay, laid his hand on the latch and opened the door.

"Judith!" he called. "Nan, where are you?"

The *voorhuis* was deserted, and he crossed to look into the office where the lessons were often held. The door was locked and he rattled it noisily.

"Give over your jesting," he called more loudly. "I have strange news for your ears."

Nobody answering he turned and was about to try his luck in the kitchen, when a movement on the stair drew his attention that way to find a

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strange lady standing half-way down, staring at him. For a moment he eyed her in surprise; then quite unconscious of offense, he asked:

"Is aught wrong, madam? Seemingly I can make no one hear me."

"Fear not for that," the lady replied tartly. "Your shouts would raise the dead. But as it happens my niece is not here. Your news must wait."

Tom Lane being a personable young man and friendly withal, was not accustomed to such treatment as he now received. The lady turned on the stair with some difficulty, presenting a figure that he likened to two short, well-stuffed links of sausage, and ponderously ascended again to the floor above.

Tom was left, mouth open, eyes lifted, to the enjoyment of his own company.

For a moment he stood as if rooted; then he swung on his heel and passed into the kitchen, as he had intended to do before the recent interruption. It, too, was empty. However, going out by that door, he at last discovered Metje, directing a man who was spading a stretch of ground to the rear.

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He went to her at once, restrained from calling by the hint he had received indoors.

"This," said she, not waiting for Tom to speak, "is our new man, Simple Simon by name and the same by nature. I fear, when planting time comes, he will set out tulips to eat instead of onions an I am not by to lesson him."

Simple Simon continued at his recently acquired trade after pulling his forelock in acknowledgment of the introduction.

"In truth," he mumbled, "I do be needin' a lot of schoolin'. Metje will have to stand between me and many a ratin'."

Metje sniffed disdainfully, and Tom interrupted the yokel's maunderings to ask impatiently, "Where have they gone and who is the strange dame? Why did Judith not warn me her aunt was coming a-visiting?"

"Sakes alive," said Metje, "if you know 't is her aunt why ask me who she is? And the *juffer* has but walked home with Nan."

She had time to say no more, for Tom was off like a flash, determined to meet Judith and escort her back.

A LADY GROWS IMPATIENT

In the garden Robin lifted his bent back and followed the young man with his eyes.

"Did I not tell you none would know me behind a spade," he chuckled.

"You've no time to waste an you would get this plot mellow before night falls," Metje told him.

"Eh, then, the hard-hearted woman you are," he said with a pretended sigh, but for all that Robin returned to his work.

Meanwhile Tom, hastening on, met the Jaspyn sisters, who stopped him, feeling that it was scarce friendly to pass by this new member of their Company as they would a stranger.

"'T is growing so warm we will soon have to think of our strawberry festival," Marya said, for want of something better.

"Has your sister bought her basket? The *wilden* are making them in the shed back of the old Kierstede house," Blandina suggested kindly, and Tom thanked her.

"You are new to our ways, so I must tell you that you should invite a maid to be your partner

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for that day. Is it not strange that Judith begrudged the money for her trappings—”

“If Judith goes at all,” Blandina interrupted her sister, not liking the turn her conversation was taking, “she will have to go with her cousin, I suppose.”

“’T will be no hardship,” cried Marya. “I saw him at the gate with her great dog one day, and later, having an errand there, I met him. Since then I’ve seen him often. He is wonderful agreeable. A most complete young gentleman I make sure.”

“I have not had a chance to see him yet,” Blandina owned regretfully, “but his mother invited us both to bring our *Juffer-bockjes* for him to write in. She says he hath a very pretty taste in verse making.”

“I have n’t met this excellent young man,” Tom said, ready to go on.

“Our Piet is planning to ask your lovely sister’s hand for the strawberry hunt,” Blandina called as they were moving off. “He will help you, should you want for a partner one of us you do not yet know.”

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"If I must ask some one," said Tom, "I shall choose Nan Homan."

This stayed the girls' steps.

"Nan Homan!" exclaimed Marya, almost stuttering with excitement. "Is that not the child of Daniel Homan? She is not a member of our Company."

"Surely you are jesting," Blandina said. "You know our Companies are regulated very strictly by age. Even Marya was not admitted without discussion; but she had always played with me and my friends, so it was decided that to shut her out as too young would be unkind."

"But why should any one want Nan Homan?" Marya asked, bursting with surprise and curiosity. "Her father's reputation—"

"Because she's sweetly pretty," Tom interrupted, not eager to hear the repetition of stale gossip, "and I like her well, but I bow to your customs. It was my ignorance made me propose her."

Again the sisters started onward, but, once out of hearing, Marya gasped.

"Didst ever hear the like? A child of Nan

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Homan's age to be set above all the maids of our Company! That's what we get for asking *Uitlanders* to join us."

"To my mind 't was only that Master Lane was so undone at hearing that Judith would have another escort," Blandina said, but this was not pleasing to Marya.

"With you it is ever Judith," she declared crossly. "Judith here and Judith there. One might think that no other maid was ever born with hair or eyes or skin, to hear you talk."

Blandina wisely let this pass, yet Marya went on.

"Why you set such store by her is a mystery to me. Selfish she is, and close-fisted as a miser, as I tell every one."

"Marya," her sister interrupted, "of this I must speak, for if I cannot silence you myself I shall ask *moeder* to take a hand in the matter. Do you not see that you do yourself great harm and prove yourself lacking in loyalty to your Company when you talk of one of its members as you do of Judith?"

"By scolding me you do naught to prove Judith free and generous," Marya said spitefully.

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After which the sisters pursued their way in hostile silence.

Meanwhile Tom Lane had walked on; but somehow the fun and excitement seemed to have gone from what he had to tell Judith. Instead he could think of nothing but the childish business of the strawberry festival, to berate himself that ever he had joined the Company at all.

"That younger Jaspyn girl, she of the lobster eyes and snub nose, had it in mind that, lacking Judith, I would ask her to accompany me," he thought exasperatedly, hardly fair in his annoyance to Marya's charms. "I'll stay at home first! And who is this cousin who comes popping up from nowhere? Faith, if he is as broad in the beam as his sainted mama he'll be a romantic object to be tied to for the day."

Somewhat comforted by the thought of a wide and waddling Carolus, Tom mended his pace and came upon Judith just as she and Nan were about to part.

The sight of them reawakened his interest in his strange experience, and he hastened to gain the attention of his audience.

"I've had a most mysterious adventure," were

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his first words, without ceremony of greeting, save that he still deserved Nan's commendation by reason of a doffed hat.

"Returning to my father's warehouse from my errand in the country, I was stopped in the street by a most villainous old hag—"

"Was it a witch, Tom?" demanded Nan excitedly. "Did she have crossed eyes, and on her chin a mole with three hairs growing from it?"

"It had not occurred to me before that this female was a witch," Tom answered, "though indeed, now that you suggest it, it seems no more than credible, for she assuredly robbed me of all good sense. What first caught my eye was a thriving beard."

"It was a witch," Nan nodded contentedly; "go on!"

"So stiff it was and bristling, that I took her for a man in disguise, and Robin in the *huik* at once entered my mind, which scarce explains why, when she asked me would I be spirited enough to help a lady in distress, my thoughts flew to you, Judith; yet on the spur of the moment I said, 'Assuredly.' Whereat she started hobbling off

A LADY GROWS IMPATIENT

across the pebbles, down one side of the slope to the gutter, over the stones and up the other side, briskly enough for all her bent back and gray hairs.

“Sober second thought always daunts a man’s ardor, and before we reached the next corner I had time to take counsel with my inner self as to the foolishness of what I was doing, hurrying through the streets of Yorke behind a tattered hag, on an errand I knew naught of; so I mended my pace and overtook her, laying a hand upon her shoulder.

“At my touch she leaped to one side and let up an eldritch screech, raising her iron-shod staff as if to beat me about the head.

“Seeing who it was, she lowered her weapon but looked at me with scant sweetness.

“‘What’s your will?’ she asked. ‘Canst not blow hot and cold with me! Hast lost thy taste for adventure so quickly?’

“‘’T is not so much that I have lost my taste for adventure,’ I told her, ‘as that a man is a fool who enters a battle unarmed. Why throw away a good cause for lack of preparation? I must know more of those I am to meet.’

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"In truth I had no weapon save my two fists and thought it foolish to go on.

"For a moment she looked at me evilly, but when she spoke her words were smooth enough.

"‘Young sir,’ she said, ‘he who goeth to meet a lady hath no need of any defense save a hard heart. An thou art minded to turn back, waste not my time. There be other gallants in this town of proper spirit.’

"‘Then,’ said I, ‘if there is only a lady in question I am ready enough to go on, but, if she expects from me aught in the way of defense, it would be well that I should know it to make my preparations ere it is too late.’

"At this the old harridan started on again, mumbling under her breath the while, ‘Small chance is there the quality would open their minds to me. All I can say is, I was not told to bid ye bring arms.’

"Where it was possible to take a by-path or an evil-smelling back street she seemed to choose it by instinct, but at last she stopped at the half-open door of an oast-house, still scented by its last drying of hops.

"‘’T is here she is to meet you,’ she said, ‘and

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you are to pay me a silver sixpence for my pains.'

"I put my hand in my pocket to comply with this request, when it struck me that this, most like, was the end and aim of the whole expedition, and I drew it out again empty. There was no lady there nor would there be, and if I paid the dame for leading me on such a wild goose chase I should be a fool for my pains.

"'Indeed,' said I. 'I am to pay you? Since when has it been the custom for the one sent for to pay the messenger? When the lady comes you will be paid, but not before.'

At this, as I expected, she flew into a rage. Her very eyes grew red with anger and she foamed at the mouth, raising her stick threateningly. For all her malevolence, she was but a frail old thing, and I hesitated to touch her for two reasons. First, I dreaded to hurt her by accident; or, escaping that, I dreaded lest she make claim to the authorities that I had done so. Yet she commanded the path."

"And all this pother over a sixpence!" Judith said. "I should have paid her and gotten me gone, though I like as little as any to be tricked out of my money."

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"But, Judith," cried Nan, with round eyes, "do you not see he could not? 'T was a matter of—of—" she hesitated for the word.

"Of principle," Tom nodded. "Yes, that was it. I could not allow myself to be so put upon. We English are for justice—"

"O you English!" Judith sighed. "Never will I understand you. But go on."

"I did not go on." Tom flushed at the acknowledgment. After all it was not a heroic figure he had cut. "A cloth was thrown over my head, I was dragged into the oast-house, and the door slammed. I fought a bit, but when you are pinioned from behind you have small chance for self-defense. Moreover, I discovered that there was no desire to hurt me. I was handled as gently as was consistent with turning out my pockets. The old woman got her sixpence with interest, for 't was evident that those who had taken me held her tongue in great respect. My hands and feet were bound and, with my head still muffled in a cloth, I was pulled a few paces and bidden to seat myself on a keg. Then we waited.

"My assailants, whom I took to be two in

A LADY GROWS IMPATIENT

number, stood on either side of me quite motionless. Time passed but slowly, I do not need to tell you, and at last one of the men muttered, 'Dost think she hath left us in the lurch?'

" 'She 'll be here at her own good pleasure,' the other returned; but this exchange told me there was a female expected and set me a-wondering what she could want with me, who had already two bravos at her command.

"With something to ponder on time passed more quickly, and at last the creaking of the door and a faint light penetrating my mufflings led me to conjecture that some one had come in. The men said naught, and it was some seconds ere a female voice broke the long silence.

" 'Is this Master Lane?' it asked, in drawling tones. 'How could my orders have been so misunderstood? Get ye gone out of here! And think yourselves lucky if you escape without punishment.'

" 'But your—' one of the men began.

"There was the stamp of a foot.

" 'Silence! Begone, I say!' The door creaked again and I knew that the lady and I were alone."

THE FLOWER OF FORTUNE

Tom paused, enjoying the breathless interest that his recital was arousing.

“Go on,” said Nan, “what happened next?”

“I felt a hand on my head wrappings; then the voice said, ‘You are on your honor, sir, not to look around.’ The wrappings were removed, and, while I drew a full breath, for they were smothering things, a folded kerchief was passed over my eyes.

“‘This is for your protection,’ the voice said. ‘If you are questioned, you can vow you know not who sent for you.’

“‘Indeed, madam,’ I told her mock seriously, ‘I hope that where a lady is concerned I could be trusted to lie like a nobleman.’

“As reward for this sauciness I received a good rap over the head.

“‘That for your insolence,’ she said sharply; and I returned, sulkily enough, for I liked not such treatment, ‘If such is my recompense for an offer to sacrifice even my love of truth to your interests, I had better keep silence.’

“Whereupon she upbraided herself very prettily for misunderstanding my meaning, and at last got down to the reason for my being taken

A LADY GROWS IMPATIENT

as I was. . . . Judith, she wanted a true and full account of the rendering into Here van Bursum's hands of your keg of treasure."

"What excuse did she give for such curiosity?" the girl demanded.

"A plausible excuse enough," Tom acknowledged. "She hinted that she had been robbed of her patrimony of gold and jewels, and fancied the treasure I had helped to guard might be her fortune."

"What did you tell her?" Judith asked.

"Faith," Tom owned freely, "I know not whether what I did was for the best, but I told her the plain truth. I could not have her think an English gentleman helped a robber. And it seemed to me safer for you that the Here van Bursum should be known to have the care of the money. He must have a guard over his gold, whereas you have no one to depend upon save Krumm and the watch."

"Oh," Nan put in, "did you not know, Tom, that Judith is alone no longer? She hath an uncle and a lusty cousin for protection."

"I met your aunt but now, when I entered in search of you." Tom spoke to Judith over

THE FLOWER OF FORTUNE

Nan's head. "And the Jaspyn sisters told me of your cousin."

"Carolus de Heem is not my cousin," Judith corrected him at once. "No relation at all is he in fact, for he is but stepson to my stepaunt."

"Were he son-in-law to my aunt by law I would claim him for a cousin fast enough," cried Nan, "though he does tease me by pretending that I am a redskin."

Tom looked at Nan, somewhat surprised at this outburst. He had thought the child one who would not be quick to make friends, and here she was already taken with this stranger. The idea pleased him little, and Judith's interruption was welcome.

"Finish your tale," she said. "'T is of vastly more interest than Carolus de Heem. We left you seated upon a keg while a lady stood behind you quizzing you."

"In truth that sounds as if I were discourteous," Tom returned, "but the fact is I know not did she sit or stand. My eyes were tightly tied and I was pelted with questions so fast that I had much ado to answer them. Who was Robin? How did I know the money was yours? Might it

A LADY GROWS IMPATIENT

not have been a treasure-trove, as I could not claim to have seen it paid over? Did Robin talk to me of hidden treasure while we walked behind the dog-boy as guards?"

"Did you know that he had signed on the *Angel of Peace*?" Judith asked.

"Not before I spoke with her, but she cried me the news when I suggested that, if Robin had knowledge of hidden treasure, he might be paid to share it. She said he had doubtless gone to join some privateer fitting out to prey on the king's enemies, which did not greatly surprise me. I thought Robin ripe for another back-sliding."

At his words Nan turned on him like a small tigress defending her cub.

"I hate you for that, Tom Lane!" she said hotly. "If a poor sailor like Robin signs on a privateer he needs must be a buccaneer and marooner. But your father and other rich gentlemen may build and own the ships such men sail on without scathe to their great names. They risk nothing. At least Robin risks his life to fight his country's enemies." Bursting into tears the child flashed by them and ran into the house.

THE FLOWER OF FORTUNE

"Now what did I say to raise such a storm?" Tom asked helplessly, anxious to run after the child to comfort her, but not sure how to go about it.

"I know not, save that she is deeply attached to Robin. Finish your tale. That keg may be powder ready to blow you through the roof for all I know."

This attempt to speak lightly helped to clear the air, and Tom resumed his story, but the spirit had gone out of the recital.

"At last the lady gave over questioning me, having gotten little to her liking out of me. 'I shall cut the cord that binds your wrists,' she said, 'but I trust to your gentlemanliness not to look after me nor follow me when I leave you.'

"'The temptation is great,' I told her. 'One who has spent an hour with you must not be blamed if he schemes to spend another.'

"Strange to say this, that I had meant for raillery, seemed to flatter her. She loosed my bonds and passed a finger over the weals on my wrists.

"'There, there, poor boy!' she said; 'they used you too hard.'



"She wore a vizard of black satin"

A LADY GROWS IMPATIENT

“ ‘Nay,’ I returned, ‘ ’t is not that I complain of, but that they cut my purse.’ ”

“In a moment she was on fire. ‘What took they?’ she demanded.

“ ‘But a few florins, madam,’ I answered.

“ ‘ ’T was scarce worth the trouble,’ she returned scornfully, whereat I put up my hands deliberately to loose the kerchief, and still she stood in the doorway. When it came off she was still there and I could feel her gazing at me mockingly; but by the time my feet were freed she was gone.”

“How looked she?” asked Judith breathlessly.

Tom shrugged.

“I know not. She wore a vizard of black satin.”

CHAPTER XIII

IN WHICH JUDITH ENGAGES HERSELF FOR THE STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

“**A** VIZARD of black satin!” Judith echoed Tom Lane’s words. Then, impatiently: “But her mouth? Her chin? Her figure? What were they like? Would you know her again?”

“As to her mouth and chin, her vizard was fringed with lace well designed to hide them. As to her figure, she wore a man’s cloak of Spanish cloth, turned inside out to display the velvet lining.”

“Her shoes, then; what saw you of them? Had she paste buckles?”

“I know not.” Tom shrugged his shoulders helplessly. “The heels were red—I think—”

“So are half the heels in town,” Judith cried impatiently. “Oh, would that I had been there. I would have ferreted out who she was ere we parted.”

THE STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

"I would you had been there," Tom said dryly, "an it would have pleased you, for I found scant amusement to pay for the loss of my purse." In fact the young man began to feel himself ill-used at her reception of his tale. She seemed to have thoughts only for what he had failed to observe.

"So you saw naught at all save a cloak, a vizard, and a red heel." Judith pursued disconsolately, ignoring his peevishness. Then brightening; "Her hair! It's color you must have seen."

"The lady was not in her hair," Tom returned. "Her head was swathed about with folds of muslin, lace-edged."

"After all, it is of no moment," Judith said. "I know who it was and need no proof."

"You know who it was?" Tom echoed incredulously.

"It was my Lady Bellomont," Judith declared positively. "She hath taken it into her head that my moneys were a pirate treasure, belonging by rights to her husband as governor."

"The province or crown might have rights in such a trove," Tom said, after a moment's

THE FLOWER OF FORTUNE

thought, "though I fear there would be small chance that most treasure seekers would haste to turn over their find to the authorities."

"As there is no treasure there 's naught to turn over," Judith remarked practically.

They were nearing her house now and Tom hurried to broach another subject that was in his mind, for he had no intention of again facing her formidable aunt that day.

"When I joined your Company, I had thought that you and I would spend some gay hours together at the strawberry festival and other such picnics; but now the Jaspyns tell me you are promised to your cousin."

A flood of color overspread Judith's face to make her anger and annoyance the more evident.

"I?" she cried, half incredulously, "I promised to Carolus! How dared they?"

Tom Lane was startled by the storm his words had roused, and, feeling that he had not reported the conversation exactly, he hastened to correct his first story.

"I think I have scarce given you a true idea of what was said. Their belief was that, out of

THE STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

courtesy to a guest in your house, you would be obliged to accept your cousin's escort."

"How many times must I say that Carolus de Heem is no cousin of mine?" Judith snapped. "As to going with him to the festival I'll stay at home first!"

The gate was at hand and all of the De Heems were in the garden, drawn thither by the air, which was warm and balmy.

Judith had paused to make her emphatic declaration and then started forward, but Tom stopped her once more.

"If you do not mean to go with him, will you go with me?" he asked eagerly.

"Gladly," said Judith, the while she watched with a truculent eye a young man on the other side of the garden wall who seemed to have no thought for her but busied himself in the summer-house with his chess-board.

No further words were spoken till they reached the gate where Judith formally asked Tom to enter. He as formally refused, and they parted, he to walk homeward and she to enter the garden.

"It has taken you very long to go the short way

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to the Waal Straat and back," her aunt called pointedly as the girl walked up the path.

"It was too hot to hasten," Judith returned indifferently, although she was aware that this was another of the pin-pricks she was constantly called on to endure.

"I cannot think your aunt should permit you to prance upon the streets escorted by English strangers," De Heem declared. "She should put her foot down, nor so allow you to misuse your liberty."

Judith had told herself that she would hold her hot temper in check and bear with the De Heems until it was in her power to bid them begone; but now she had been deeply annoyed and hurried into a step that her sober second judgment warned her was hasty. Carolus, for all he was his father's son, was her guest, and if she were minded not to go to the strawberry festival with him, she should have found him a partner before agreeing to go with any other. Moreover, that other, to confound her aunt's ready criticism, should have been an old friend and Dutch. All these things Judith knew, and they served but to increase her irritation. Almost without her vo-

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lition she crossed the grass to the summer-house where they all sat and, stopping in front of De Heem, looked him up and down:

"Sir," she said, "this is an English plantation now. The Lords Orphan Masters themselves, were I in their care, would scarce hold me to blame for politeness to an English friend."

"*Orange boven*," sighed Vrouw de Heem, in the tone of one invoking the aid of a sacred relic. "Times are changed indeed if our Dutch maidens make friends of the English usurpers. I have no wish to interfere, Judith, nor do I claim the authority that you see fit to deny, but in truth I cannot think it best for your good name that this rowdy Englishman should be let go roaring through this house as if it were his own."

"And since when has a maiden's house been shut to an honest *queester*," bawled Metje angrily from the kitchen window. "Her suitor he is. The lad is a good lad and one of her own Company at that. There is naught in the law, English or Dutch, that forbids courting, is there?"

"These childish Companies Judith should long have outgrown. A girl betrothed to one man cannot, unless she is light-minded, receive an-

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other," said Vrouw de Heem, tight-lipped but trembling.

"And who dare say I am betrothed to any one?" Judith demanded advancing on the older lady almost threateningly. "I am free as air, and so I purpose to remain."

"Your father and I had serious correspondence on the question of your marriage to Carolus," her aunt told her, for once holding her ground. "He favored the match, and, as a dutiful daughter—"

"As a dutiful daughter, if it were needful to throw myself and my fortune into the balance to pay my father's debts I might hold it a duty so to do; but I do not fear things coming to that pass." Judith's glance traveled past the De Heems and rested, almost triumphantly, on the bed where her cherished tulip-bulbs lay hid. "Until they do, I will submit to neither criticism nor control. I shall go where I please with whom I please."

Her indignation lifted her quite out of herself, and she stood there fronting the De Heems rather like some wild thing native to the land than a stolid Dutch maiden.

From face to face her eyes ranged defiantly;

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but when they met Carolus's gaze they stopped, while he took one step forward as if answering a call and spoke directly to Judith.

"Now there I am minded to agree with you," he declared calmly. "This business of settling one's affairs for one, while it saves trouble, is sometimes irksome. Let us combine against such tyranny." As he spoke he put an arm around his stepmother and gave her a warning pat. "So far as my making any claim upon you, pray hold yourself—what was it you said? It was a good phrase and quite took my fancy. Ah, now I have it. Pray hold yourself as free as air." He swept a graceful gesture toward the tinted evening sky where the homing birds seemed to flicker across the arch and vanish. "Go where you will with whom you will; your humble servant would be the last to hinder you." Making her a little, half-ironical bow, he loosed his hold of his stepmother and, still speaking to Judith, went on. "All embarrassment being happily at an end between us, may I ask if you will give me a little information about a plant I have found in the rear of the vegetable garden, which shows signs of early sprouting? Your learned gar-

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dener, doubtless a worthy fellow, assures me it is poisonous *penhawiss* used by the Indians to tip their arrows, so that their enemies turn blue and die unpeacefully; but, as he thinks that hyacinths are a superior kind of radish, I have my doubts of his authority in this matter."

Somehow Judith found herself walking toward the back of the property beside Carolus, while behind them Here de Heem swore a gentle oath.

"Now what means that?" complained his wife fretfully. "It doth not seem to me that Carolus hath shown his usual good sense to throw Judith back her father's promise, for so it might almost have been called."

"And to me," her husband answered, jeering as usual at her opinions, "it seems that he has made what might be called a stroke of genius. To let a girl like that go free is, I verily believe, the only way to bind her to you."

"Carolus is very clever," sighed his mother.

"For once at least I am inclined to agree with you," De Heem said, "but I shall be better satisfied when I see them married."

The pair had moved well away from the house to a spot where Metje, for all her sharp ears,

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could not overhear them; yet Claes de Heem looked all around before he answered his wife's next question. She spoke almost musingly.

"Stupid though you think me, Claes, I can read you at most times as a scholar reads his horn-book. I know why I want Judith to marry Carolus. She has, for life at least, a tidy fortune, and I would rather she married him than a stranger on whom I would have no claim, and who might be jealous of my love for our son and seek to cut me off from him; but you—you want it more by far than I. Why? What is your motive? For that you always have one I know well."

"There are reasons why I hold that it would be desirable," De Heem acknowledged, after his questing look around," but I think we may safely leave it to Carolus now. He will manage better than we. That I see plainly."

For a moment silence fell between them only broken by a snarl from Krumm as De Heem paced too close to where he was gnawing a bone and slashed at him in passing.

"I shall take that iron-shod staff of Van Taarl's

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and give that brute the beating he deserves some fine night," he muttered.

"Better not," Vrouw de Heem spoke with one of her flashes of shrewdness. "Unless you wish to go to the City Tavern to lodge, the dog should bear a charmed life for you. Judith expects you to move against him."

"That's twice you have been right in one day," De Heem said. "Clearly the end of the world is at hand; but let not the brute attack me, for even Judith could scarce expect me not to defend myself."

He turned to go back to the house when Vrouw de Heem faced him with one more question:

"Claes, suppose Carolus was not so clever as you think. Suppose he meant what he said to Judith—that for all of him she might consider herself as free as air?"

De Heem considered this for a moment.

"You don't think—" he paused,—“you don't think the young fool would break his given word?"

CHAPTER XIV

IN WHICH CAROLUS ALSO NAMES HIS PARTNER

“OUR *wilden* do not tip their arrows with poison,” Judith said as she walked toward the vegetable garden beside Carolus.

“You disappoint me.” Her companion spoke lightly. “The idea of dying a wondrous blue was such a pleasing one. I must then, perforce, credit this man of yours with more imagination than is usual among such hinds.”

“You think he meant to befool you?” Judith asked. “Be not so sure of that. The commoner folk hold to many superstitions and fancies about the *wilden*.”

Full well she knew that Robin had been making game of the stranger, and she meant to chide him for it and to warn him not to draw too much attention to himself for his safety’s sake.

“If the Indians do not make use of such a poison,” Carolus said, “’t is useless for us to

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search for this bush, which in truth looked vastly like a gooseberry bush to my eyes. Instead let us stop here until we come to some agreement."

In an instant Judith was in arms and faced him, her swift color dying her cheeks crimson.

"I don't believe there ever was a bush," she cried angrily. "Let me pass. There can be no agreement between us."

Carolus stood in her path with lifted eyebrows. His quizzical eyes did not drop before the smoldering fire in hers.

"Softly, softly!" His voice was gentle and even. "*Patiti-patita*. I am all for peace. You shall go, of course as you wish it. But I am sorry. I had hoped to be of service."

There was a note of sincerity in his tone, and although he stepped aside to make way for her, Judith did not go.

"I will listen," she spoke as if against her will. "What is it you have to say?"

"First," Carolus suggested, "hating us as you do, why do you not arrange some composition with my father and be rid of us?"

"I cannot," Judith returned shortly. "I promised I would pay every stuyver."

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Several questions came at once into young De Heem's mind, but he dismissed them all. He could not ask her when she expected to be able to settle her father's affairs without arousing a suspicion that he was not disinterested.

"I'm a man of peace," he sighed at last. "As it seems we are doomed to be your guests for some time longer, is it not possible to call a truce so that we do not live such a cat and dog life?"

"The dissensions are none of my making," Judith declared, tight-lipped.

"It—it would save somewhat of the friction if you and I presented an appearance of friendship," Carolus suggested, but Judith wheeled on him like a flash, her fists clenched.

"I'm no hypocrite! We're not friends!"

Carolus spread wide his hands.

"Mademoiselle," he reminded her gently, "I'm not suing for your friendship. I can think of nothing I have less use for, but I am all for a peaceful life. Surely there is no hypocrisy in pretending friendship if we do not deceive each other."

"Do you hate me as much as I hate you?" Judith asked childishly conscious of considerable

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surprise, for what reason had Carolus to hate her?

Carolus looked at her, still with that curious, half-indulgent, half-quizzical smile on his lips.

"As to that I cannot say," he returned gravely. "But your affairs are inconvenient, mademoiselle. They have seriously interrupted my study of chess."

Looking into his grave face, Judith knew not whether this was jest or earnest, and not wishing to acknowledge her puzzlement, she changed the subject.

"Why do you call me 'mademoiselle'?" she asked. "Full well you know that I am Dutch."

"It is hard to find anything that I may call you without offense," Carolus replied, his eyes intent on a stone that he was rolling along the walk with the toe of his shoe. "Moreover you look like a French girl."

"I do!" Judith cried, astonished, and for the first time, met Carolus' swift glance without animosity. "Now I know not if I like that or no."

"'T was not a compliment but a statement of fact," he told her gravely. "Brown skin, brown hair, brown eyes the color of old Madeira, a

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figure slender as a wand. Does that describe a proper *juffrouw*?"

"And pray how should a Dutch lady look?"

"Ah," cried Carolus, "now you have set me at task. Well, let me see. Skin like an apple blossom, satin soft and pink and white. Hair the color of wheat in the sun, figure well rounded, broad-hipped, moving like a swan—"

"Swans waddle," Judith interposed demurely. "I have never thought them graceful—"

"Like a swan upon the water," Carolus went on, disregarding the interruption, "placid, soothing, never contentious."

"And now we have it," Judith laughed, quite forgetting to whom she was talking. "Her charm is clear to me at last. 'Never contentious!' To say 'yes, sir,' and 'no, sir'; to hang upon your words; never to dare think but that you are right when clearly you are wrong; to have no mind of one's own; that then is the sort of maiden you like."

"I had not yet said that I liked the Dutch *juffrouw*," Carolus returned with pretended meekness, "but, as I see it will meet your views, I'll gladly do so. Here's to the ladies of the

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Low Countries." He pretended to quaff a toast in their honor and became aware that Judith was laughing at him, her white teeth shining and her eyes dancing.

"Now what is there amusing about that?" he asked, taken by surprise for once.

"Naught, naught, save that you are so very French, monsieur," she said, as lightly as he might have done himself. "Nose aquiline, eyes dark, and quick glancing, hair, also dark. Figure slender and graceful, manner vivacious—"

"Nay, there you slander me, I vow," Carolus interrupted.

"Not to say frivolous," Judith continued, waving aside his attempt to make himself heard, "while the proper Dutch gentleman is blond, broad of shoulder, solid of build with opinions as solid, which clearly merit the ladies' admiration."

"And now your views on English gentlemen would be valuable," Carolus suggested slyly, "for I find that this is a country divided against itself.

But Judith would not let herself be put out of countenance by this reference to Tom Lane.

"Perchance this divison is less than it seems,"

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she returned coolly, her chin well elevated. "Some of the maids of my Company were talking this matter over not long ago and we decided that, as Patria loved us so little that we were handed back to the English whether we liked it or no, it was time we doffed the orange for the colors of our new country."

Carolus hid a little start at this bold expression of opinion.

"I see," he said, slightly hesitant. "'T is after all to an English lady that I speak and I should call you 'miss.'"

"Mademoiselle will do," Judith returned calmly. "I like the sound of it, monsieur."

Now having got this far in amity it was hard for the time to fetch back again to her old feeling of resentment against Carolus. After all, why had she been so down on him? He had done nothing offensive. It had been enough for her that he was his father's son. Moreover, there was one thing that she had very much wanted to ask him, and here was an opportunity that might not come again.

"Tell me," she spoke abruptly, "did you try to warn me the day after you came? You were

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puzzling over a problem on your chess-board, I remember."

"I warn you—on a matter of business, mademoiselle?"

It was a slip and Judith pounced upon it.

"You did!" she cried. "I felt it at the time but could not understand. Why did you do it?"

"As I said then," Carolus seeing it was useless to evade, determined to make the best of the matter, "in life, as in chess, 't is useless to move unless you better your position."

"But why should *you* warn *me*?" Judith was frankly puzzled. "That was what baffled me. Surely your interests lie with your family."

Carolus shrugged his shoulders.

"If you mean that it is to my interest to help my father add to his store of *guilders* I do not see eye to eye with you. The richer he grows the more will his ambitions and mine be at variance. I have no wish that he should get the better of you in this matter of the *Great Mogul*."

"Get the better of me!" Judith echoed his words in surprise. "How could he do that?"

Carolus shrugged his shoulders.

"That I know not. I told no more than the

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truth when I said that I was useless in business; but I am quite sure that, an it is possible, he will. For in all the Low Countries there is no one who is his equal for seizing on the long end of the stick."

"Still I do not understand." Judith was thinking aloud, but she stopped herself, remembering that Carolus did not know, as she did, the poverty to which his father was reduced.

"Forget that for the time," said Carolus, "and answer my questions. How did Here Van Taarl speak of the affair of the *Great Mogul*? Did he seem to look upon it with my father's eyes?"

"My father had waited years for such a chance as this voyage of the *Mogul* presented," Judith said. "I gathered that he meant to return to Patria so rich that there would be no bottom to his purse. Once and again he had been disappointed, but this time there was a vast profit to be made, and he determined to carry cargo for no one else in order to reap the whole reward himself. It was then that your father and mother came crying to him for some small share in the venture."

"There the stories vary," Carolus pointed out

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gravely. "My father saith that he begged them to invest."

"I did not contradict him because I could not see that it mattered," the girl declared, "but on his death-bed my father would scarce lie. At all events the *Mogul* was seized by pirates and all their hopes were lost together. The strangest thing about it was this. The *Mogul*, once laden and at sea, opened certain sealed orders and thereafter took a very unusual course. No free-booters had been heard of for a long time, but with practically his all at stake my father ordered that no risks were to be run even at the expense of a lengthened voyage. And it was his contention that his commands must have been known to the pirates who met and seized the galleon."

Carolus nodded his head up and down slowly, and into his eyes there crept the look of one who sees a light.

"The puzzle is piecing together bit by bit," he murmured, "but it is all surmise. No proof of any kind. If I could lay my hands on one single grain of proof!"

"Proof of what?" Judith demanded.

"Be assured that I shall tell you as soon as I

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know myself," Carolus said, "but it would be useless to set your brain in a turmoil like to mine. Tell me instead something of this strange and humorous gardener of yours. How long have you known him and how well?"

"You must not take his little joke amiss, if joke it was," Judith said avoiding a direct answer. "He is a harmless soul. If he did attempt to be-fool you it was perchance to make himself important in Metje's eyes. Moreover a new-comer to the country is always fair game. I mind me once when Jan Hercz had a cousin from Patria come to see the New World. He was brought to one of our picnics on Nutten Iseland. The boys were at the age when they all were pretending to be Indians, wore moccasins, went armed with bows and arrows, and took vast pride in their markmanship. They were shooting at a target and lost an arrow in the water. Wolfert Flipsen, the lad who lost it, assured Bastian that it would be found, with four notches in the staff to tell it by, stuck in the gate-post when they went back to the Manhattans, as proof of how far a good bowman could send an arrow. Till the day he left us poor Bastian never ceased to recount the

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wonder of it, and he carried the notched arrow with him in proof."

"Who stuck it in the gate-post?" asked Carolus, laughing.

"Oh, there would have been quite a sheaf there, if all who hastened ahead to supply them had had their way," Judith returned lightly. "Bastian kept tight hold of Wolfert to see that he did n't play him false; but he had no suspicion of us maids."

By mutual consent they turned and wandered back toward the house. Seeing them deep in converse, both Here and Vrouw de Heem pretended to busy themselves about the arbor. Moeve Beletje, however, only too ready to believe that Judith had at last succumbed to Carolus's invincible charm, and desirous to tighten the bond between them, opened a subject that she had had in mind for some time as soon as they came within hearing.

"What's this I hear of a strawberry festival, Judith?" she asked amiably, putting a fat hand within Carolus's arm. "Have you and my boy made your arrangements to go together?"

"The festival will not occur for months,"

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Judith said. "We have no strawberry blossoms yet, let alone fruit."

"But, when it does come, you two must go together," her aunt persisted, pressing the point. "That of course is understood."

Judith hesitated. It had to come out sometime, and it mattered little whether it was now or later.

"I cannot go with him, Moeye Beletje," she said, "I am bespoken by another."

For a moment there was silence; then Here de Heem said coldly.

"In politeness, your partner will relinquish his claim when he hears that your cousin has come."

Judith's antagonism was ever ready to be fanned into a blaze by any breath of opposition from this man, so now she would not have relinquished Tom Lane for any cavalier in the world.

"The engagement was made no earlier than to-day, and I am not minded to break it," she returned eying her aunt's husband disdainfully,

"This passes all bearing. I will not be so defied," De Heem began, when Carolus, cool and unruffled, and seemingly just arriving at an understanding at what was going on, interposed.

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"'Tis evident that I owe mademoiselle an apology; but, as things are, I am happily relieved from making it. It had not occurred to me that it was my pleasant duty to act as her escort, and I have made other arrangements."

"You mean, Carolus, that you do not wish to go with Judith?" Vrouw de Heem piped, as if unable to believe her ears.

"That is such a crude way of putting it," Carolus smiled. "Instead let us say I want to go with her exactly as much as she wants to go with me. The Juffer Marya Jaspyn has honored me, however."

"Aha!" said Judith to herself, "the apple-blossom Dutch maid."

"Aha!" said De Heem to himself, "another maid was all that was needed to turn his silly head."

CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH ROBIN MAKETH A SAD CONFESSION

THE strange attempt upon Tom had brought to Judith's remembrance her forgotten promise to Lady Bellomont. Robin was supposed to have sailed, and in her own mind Judith had no belief that he shared the secret of any hidden wealth, but, on the other hand, if she could say that she had asked him and he had denied such knowledge the Governor's lady might be more easily satisfied and so lose her dangerous interest in the man.

One rainy day while Metje was busy above stairs, Judith sought him out where he sat close to the kitchen fire whittling at the leg of a toy table. At sight of her he rose and hastily brushed his chips into the ashes.

The girl closed the door behind her and, bidding him be seated, herself took a chair on the other side of the hearth.

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"Robin," she began, for she found an unexpected difficulty in explaining what she wished to know and her reasons therefor, "did you hear that Lady Bellomont had young Master Lane seized and questioned as to the treasure carried from here?"

"That I did not," Robin returned. "Saving your presence, I think the woman crazed."

"Mayhap she is—by loneliness," Judith said. "She is used to a gay life in England, and 't is vastly different here. I pity the poor creature. At all events, having naught else to occupy her, she lets her mind roam at will and makes great plans of what she would do if she could come by a fortune. Hearing of your pirate garb, she gave her imagination full rein, and even came to me that I in turn should go to you and ask if you had any secret concerning such a hoard as she covets."

"Now who 'd think," Robin said unexpectedly, "that a great lady and Robin Marrow would have aught in common? Yet she rides by in her coach, a dreamer of sweet dreams, and passeth me on the road, not knowing me for just such another."

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"What mean you by that?" asked Judith puzzled.

"In telling you I give myself into your hands. I only ask that you do not cry the news to Metje or my sister and so spoil their pleasure.

"I am no bold and bloody buccaneer, no gentleman of fortune. I am an honest sailor who, being sick of the sea, am minded to end my life on the shore."

"But this news would rejoice your sister!" Judith exclaimed, amazed.

"Not it," Robin declared brazenly. "She prideth herself that she hath drawn me from the evil of my ways. For, see you, like many another sailorman before me, having naught to tell but tales of head winds and hard knocks, and finding more expected of me, I made up wondrous stories out of my head to pleasure those who listened. Then, to make the tales more real, I bought here an earring, there a sash or pistol, or dagger, till I was as well outfitted as Captain Tew or Captain Kidd himself; and, when I wore these trappings, you should have seen the women and children! They listened to all I had to say, big-eyed, putting out daring fingers to touch pistol or dagger or

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cutlass that figured in the history. So real were the stories to them that almost I myself believed them. I told myself that given such chances I would have been as brave. It did no one harm, missy. It but served but to keep me amused, who might otherwise have found my daily life as sorrowless as doth her ladyship. But did my sister find me out she would ne'er forgive my innocent romancing. I beg you, let me remain a corsair with a price upon my head."

It was quite plain to Judith that Robin had at last told the truth, and she left him, pondering in her mind upon the strange vanity of a man who, to be a hero, was content also to be thought a villain.

For all the friction within her home, the last weeks of the winter went quickly to Judith.

Always De Heem the elder pressed for payment of what was owed to him, or demanded that she marry Carolus out of hand, young as she was, and so secure the promised repayment.

Always she refused steadily, thinking longingly of the time when her tulips would push through the earth to justify her faith in them,

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while Carolus sat by, busy with his chess, taking no hand in the controversy and seemingly no interest, until Judith asked herself the secret of his wooden exterior. Was he as great a knave as she felt his father to be? If not, why did he permit her to be tormented when he had it in his power to refuse to wed her? That he could make brisk use of his tongue was amply proven when the girls of her Company came visiting. They one and all voted him most amusing and envied Judith her guest, while she watched the skies for the first migrating birds and longed for the spring that would, she hoped, bring her freedom.

One event only set a day apart from all the others, so monotonous did they seem in retrospect. For some time she had wondered that the goods in the warehouse had lain undisturbed; but one morning she found several wains and drays backed up there and the work of removal progressing rapidly.

At sight of her, one of the porters stepped forward and knuckled his forehead.

"For you, *juffer*," he said, producing a small sheet of paper carefully folded and sealed with a disproportionately large seal, the imprint on

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which was so curious that Judith hesitated to break it until she had had a chance to study it.

"Is there an answer?" she asked, weighing it in her hand.

"Nay, then, I know not," the man answered surprised, "but, an there is, I can take it for you— O dunderheads, to set warming-pans atop of velvets!" He ran off in haste to take up his interrupted duties, and Judith, with the scissors of her chatelaine, slit the paper of the note, preserving the seal intact. There were so few words that she had no difficulty in joining the pieces and reading:

"In need, forget not that you have a friend," was all that was written there.

But could the Jew help her further? She stood pondering the matter deeply and then, in a flash, it came to her. If the tulip came true how was she to learn its worth? How was she to sell it? And on this sale all her hopes of freedom hung.

In haste she ran into the house and wrote a short note.

"I thank you. Do you know aught of tulips?" was her message. This she gave to the porter

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sealed, but, as before, without address; and this man as had the other, looked at her with added respect when he took it from her hand. Clearly the little Jew, Salvador Dacosta, was not without position of some sort.

Again weeks passed and at last spring came.

The sky was a wonderful clear blue against which the sails of the windmills showed brown or cream, while the white clouds chased each other across it to deepen the color of the distant landscape with their moving shadows. The trees seemed to have gathered around them a tinted mist, some rosy, some golden; and two days before, early in the morning, the first of the flights of wild pigeons had flown to the north to nest and feast on the wild carrot. So low they flew that the people of the town mounted their roofs and knocked them down with sticks, for while they passed the air was darkened with them and the beating of their wings sounded the alarm of their coming. But by ten o'clock, as always happened, they had mysteriously vanished, to be brought to memory as one of the signs of spring more certain than the first bluebird or the early thrushes with their orange breasts, who

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sometimes made the mistake of coming north before the last storms had given way to sunshine.

Judith thought of all this as she bent over her beloved tulips. She had been working in her flower garden all morning, planting and transplanting the gilly-flowers, crown imperials, jenoffelins, anemones, and bare-dames that were to make the place gay later in the season. Within she could hear Metje at her churning in the out-kitchen, her churning-charm droned out sleepily in the warm spring air:

“Buitterchee, buitterchee, comm
Alican laidlechee tubichee vall—”

repeated over and over again until Judith herself began to grow drowsy.

“Metje,” she called sharply, “what’s wrong with the butter? Make haste! I want you to go to the attic and search me out the maritoffel and summersot seeds.”

“Indeed I think the cream is bewitched,” returned Metje dolefully. “Never a cross word have I spoken to it or the churn, and yet the butter does n’t come.”

Judith smiled indulgently, as though she were the elder of the two.

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"'T is strangely slow on the first warm days of spring," she said, "when your heart is in the sunshine, and the dasher sucks up and down as if a hand were holding it back. Run you up to the garret for the seeds, and I will spell you for a while."

Nothing loth, Metje wiped her palms on a cloth hung behind the door, and her young mistress took up her task.

"I found them at once, and lily bulbs, as well as morning-stars and bellflowers. I pray you plant generously," Metje cried a few minutes later as she bustled in again. "We cannot have too many of the flowers-gentle, say I."

"I think with you, but if we greatly increase the size of the garden we will not be able to care for it ourselves."

Metje's eyes rounded at this.

"And why should you take upon yourself such mean, hard tasks?" the woman asked, ever ready to rebel at Judith's economies. "Surely you are the greatest heiress in the city. No other is there who holds her fortune in her own two hands."

"The butter is come," Judith interrupted.

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"Take charge of it, and remember what I have said before. Great possessions bring great duties. We must not let them turn our thoughts to extravagance."

She gathered together the packets of seed and went back to her gardening, while Metje looked after her shaking her head in amazement.

"At all events this proves one thing that I have always told you," she called loudly. "You have a lucky hand on the dash. I might have toiled till midnight and butter would not have come for all my trying."

Knowing that her good Metje always liked the last word, Judith made no reply to this but set about planting her seeds in the places marked for them.

In a short time Metje joined her.

"I came to look at the tulips," she said. "Think you they would be better for a sup of water?"

Judith stepped over to the flower-bed where her father's precious tulips were set out and critically regarded the soil; then she shook her head in the negative.

"I like not to begin watering," she explained.

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"We might rot the bulbs; but almost as bad is it to train them to expect their moisture from above. That means that they will not trouble to strike deep roots."

"Good lack!" cried Metje, "you talk as if they had understandings. I cannot believe they know whence their moisture comes, nor care."

Judith smiled but did not argue the point further. She was now bending over another bed, loosening the soil where it seemed to be caked with a tiny rake like a child's toy, which Metje had handed her.

"Did we remove the litter too soon?" the woman asked anxiously.

"No," said the girl positively, "I've no desire for early flowering and I greatly dread the burning of the first tender leaves when the covering is left on and our suns are hot. What we'll do is to lay breadths of our unbleached linen over the borders at night."

"Eh, then!" cried Metje, "that is a clever idea. They shall have bed-clothes of their own, the pretties, and Metje will tuck them in as if they were babies so they will not feel the frost. . . .

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Pray only that no evil-doer robs us of the linen!" She ended piously, as she went in.

On an afternoon later in the month Judith was again bending over her tulips, touching them with gentle fingers and observing with pleasure how the buds were swelling, when she heard voices hailing her from the summer-house. Tom Lane and Blandina Jaspyn were leaning over the rail calling her.

"What are those tulips apart there?" Blandina asked, running down the steps. "Master Lane and I did but venture to spread a bud open a little to see the base when Metje rushed out and nearly snapped our heads from off our shoulders."

Deeply anxious, Judith sprang to where her cherished bulbs were planted and looked them over with great care. The flowers had grown almost miraculously in the day.

"'T is time I pulled off the anthers," she said. "I must fetch a little cotton wool."

"But that is no mother tulip," cried Blandina. "'T is so strange a flower I never saw the like." Judith did not answer her but went into the

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house. Returning she opened a tulip gently (there were but two of this variety), removed the anthers, and covered the stigma with cotton, Tom Lane, new to the business of breeding tulips, watching her curiously the while.

"What is it you are doing?" he asked.

"A very silly thing," Marya, called, from the summer-house above their heads. "'T is no *by-bloemen* but a *baguette*; that I 'll grant you. Yet Blandina is right when she says it is not a breeder, so waste not your time over it. Instead come here and improve your minds by watching the *Jonchere de Heem* teach me chess."

Judith paid no heed to Marya, but answered Tom.

"This tulip is, as she says, a *baguette*, which means a tall, strong-growing variety. If it comes true—and it is so coming—I shall make much money from it, as I think I told you once before, and I am taking care now lest the seeds be crossed. I myself will pollenize it as soon as its stigma is sticky. The seed then also will come true."

"'Come true'?" Tom murmured vaguely, the

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while he thought scornfully that Judith was not tending her flowers for love, but for their worth in money.

"I have a painting of it as it was last year," she said. "'T is a strange, almost an evil-looking, flower. I will bring it to show you."

Again she went to the house, to find on her return that Nan had joined the party. She handed the water-color to Blandina, who examined it with great curiosity. There was a picture of the full flower, one of the inside, and another of a single dropping petal.

"'T is a dragon!" the girl said admiringly, "but I never saw its like. Did your father breed it? Come, Marya, look it this. 'T is better worth seeing than your chess-board."

Thus appealed to, Marya and Carolus appeared on the steps, both studying the drawing with interest.

"I congratulate you, mademoiselle," Carolus said, as he handed back the picture. "I take it what you have there is a sport. I have visited Monsieur Morine's and other famous tulip gardens and I have never seen its like; but I should

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not call it evil-looking, although 't is unusual enough to be—exciting.”

These Dutch young people seemed to meet on a common ground of knowledge that left Tom and Nan outside and suited both of them very ill.

“I vow,” exclaimed that young lady, “I have had enough of both Dutch and English for my needs until this day, yet now I understand less than the half of what you say. How can a dragon be a flower? 'T is a fabulous monster, breathing fire; that I know.”

“'T is but the name of a strange form of tulip which by some is also called *monstre*, baby,” Marya Jaspyn said condescendingly, the term ‘baby’ stirring deep wrath in Nan’s breast.

“And what, may I ask, is a sport?” Tom inquired.

“A sport,” Carolus took it upon himself to explain, “is a new and strange variety of tulip which springs up among a lot of blooms of a known kind. This is quite distinct from the breaking, or rectification, which occurs in the life of all solid-colored tulips.”

“Now I am right glad of that!” Tom ex-

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claimed flippantly. "It was a thing that troubled me sorely."

"Here then is another item of even greater interest," Carolus went on gravely, refusing to be drawn from his point. "Sports, for the most part, are permanent and their offsets come true. If these buds are like that picture when they open, the bulbs and seeds are very valuable. I congratulate you." This remark seemed to be addressed more to Tom than to Judith; but the girl replied quietly:

"I thank you. We had but the one bulb last year, so there were no seeds. Of the bulbs I now have two, so this year I shall save seeds; but, as I intend to sell the bulbs, all must go together." The girl was glowing and happy for, with the tulips about to bloom, she felt her deliverance near.

At the news that Judith meant to sell her bulbs, Marya Jaspyn cast a significant glance toward her sister which Tom caught. Here evidently was added evidence of Judith's love of wealth to the girls, too.

"Had I such a wondrous flower, come to me as a gift from heaven," Marya declared sentimen-

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tally, "no money in the world would buy it from me. And were I rich like you, Judith, I should save the seeds and plant my own garden with a rarity the whole town would rush to stare at."

"Indeed," said Nan, hurrying to Judith's defense, "that would be a silly thing to do, for 't would be most unpleasant to have the whole town staring in. It would keep Krumm barking as he is barking now, which would be deafening."

"Run, Nan. Find out what is the matter," Judith suggested, and then followed the child in haste, as she saw the Governor's lady, arriving on foot, enter her gate.

CHAPTER XVI

IN WHICH THE DRAGON TULIP BUDS

THERE was no help for it. There her ladyship was, and she must be met and welcomed. If she was an unwanted guest she could not be allowed to see it. With this in mind, Judith hastened forward to greet Lady Bellomont at the gate and escort her into the house, where Moeye Beletje would be all in a flutter at the honor.

But her ladyship willed otherwise. Catching sight of the Jaspyns dropping curtesies on the steps of the summer-house, she decided that she would be entertained there.

"This weather is so glorious," she said to Here de Heem, who had come out to be presented with due ceremony, "we should enjoy it while we may, for in this fickle climate we know not what a day may bring forth."

So into the summer-house she went, and Nan

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was sent to warn Vrouw de Heem, whose heart would be broken did she not meet the distinguished visitor.

Once they were seated in the summer-house the conversation became general, and Marya Jaspyn, who was ever eager to commend herself to any one of rank or importance, produced the picture of the dragon tulip.

"What's this?" inquired her ladyship, peering at it through her glass. "I ne'er saw such a plant in all my days."

"Is it not curious?" said Marya proudly. "Never before was there such a flower."

"Look at it, Here de Heem," said Lady Bello-mont suavely; "'t is the product of the artist's fancy no doubt."

De Heem took the parchment and examined the drawing; then he flung it carelessly upon the center-table, whence Carolus picked it up and passed it politely to Judith.

"'T is a *monstre*," said De Heem, "colored by some one with a sense of humor. The intention is assuredly to excite the curiosity of the unwary, wherefore colors have been supplied without stint. There have been rumors of *monstres*

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marquetrines with five colors, Lady Bellomont," he explained, "but this artist was over-generous: he supplied six."

"Would such a tulip be of value?" Marya asked, all of a twitter with excitement.

"Its worth would be fabulous—as fabulous as its picture!" De Heem replied indifferently. In truth he had disliked Marya ever since he suspected Carolus of a weakness for her and now enjoyed snubbing her.

"But Judith hath such a sport!" Marya cried, refusing to be set in her place. "Two of them!"

"What!" exclaimed De Heem and Lady Bellomont together; then in a moment both had mastered their excitement.

"That is vastly interesting," drawled her ladyship, leaning back languidly in her chair of Chinese bamboo. "You must show us your treasure, Juffrouw Van Taarl."

"'Tis doubtless grossly flattered in the picture," De Heem said. "Had there been a flower of this character about the place I should not have failed to see it."

"It is not yet in bloom," Judith affirmed, "but the buds are swelling. As it interests you, Lady

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Bellomont, I shall be pleased if you will pay it the compliment of drinking tea here in its honor when it is in its prime."

Before her ladyship could answer, Metje appeared in the kitchen doorway, beckoning to Judith. Foreseeing what the difficulty would prove, the girl had yet no alternative but to go. She took the picture with her to leave it in safety, and, having made due apology, she hurried to the kitchen where she found a battle royal in progress between Moeye Beletje and Metje just as she had expected.

"Judith, where are your keys?" her aunt at once demanded, her face doubly red with annoyance and her haste in dressing. "The best silver must be set forth in recognition of such an honor."

"And it black as Krumm's nose," sniffed Metje, as angry as the older woman. "Thank heaven the *meisje* is no such fool."

"Am I a fool to wish to show the mighty ones that we know what is their due?" Vrouw de Heem snapped.

Such bickerings were not to Judith's taste, although they were frequent enough in households where the servants were of equal birth and

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standing with their master's, partaking, indeed, of the nature of family quarrels, with no ill feeling remaining on either side when once a settlement was arrived at. But now the girl had neither time nor patience to end this difficulty diplomatically.

"The pewter must do us," she said firmly; "an the food is good, they 'll not think of the service."

She hurried to the store closet, where her aunt followed her in battle array.

"I do not complain that you belittle me in face of the servant," she said tearfully. "To that I am well used, but I cannot stand by silent and see Dutch honor trailed in the dust before the proud English. This fine milady will think we've naught save kitchen dishes to eat from."

"Consider, then, Moeye Beletje," Judith said coaxingly, "the silver will be tarnished. For hours must Metje rub it well with a soft deer-skin ere it will do us credit. Fortunately her ladyship hath chosen to sit in the summer-house; therefore a rustical entertainment is in order. So waste no more of your time indoors, but come with me and pour the tea for us. I'se warrant

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Lady Bellomont never tasted better, as you will serve it to her."

Thus cajoled, Vrouw de Heem consented to go to the summer-house where, in Judith's absence, the party had broken up into groups.

Tom and Blandina had seated themselves on the steps. Carolus and Marya were perched on the railing, deep in talk, and Here de Heem and Lady Bellomont had withdrawn themselves to the other side of the pleasure-house and were seemingly admiring the prospect from there.

"Tell me something of these tulips," the lady had said, with just the shade of interest proper in one who was making polite conversation. "Have I not heard that there were fortunes made in them in the Lowlands?"

"That was fifty years ago, during the height of the tulip mania," De Heem replied, none too pleased at her pursuing the subject. "Thousand of florins were given for the Admiral van der Eyck and the Semper Augustus. You see it there," he pointed, "not yet open. It has red markings on a white ground. But most of the high prices were the result of speculations in the

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collegiums or clubs, formed solely for dealing in tulips, at Delft, Alkmaar, Enkhuisen, and such places. This was gaming, pure and simple, the last thing the gamblers expected being to handle the bulbs they bought or sold so lavishly."

"Then to-day such bulbs have no value?" the noble lady asked, watching her companion under lowered lids.

"I'd not say that," De Heem returned cautiously. "They have value if they are rare or new; but I tell you plainly I have no faith in this *monstre* of Judith's. The picture is overdone; be sure of that."

"And yet," suggested her ladyship, softly, "an it were as it is drawn, it would be valuable?"

"Aye," De Heem acknowledged unwillingly, "it would have a value."

"Then," the lady went on, "you cannot think it right to leave it in the hands of a child. It should be taken up and properly cared for in order to make the most of it—for Judith," she added smoothly, still measuring the man beside her beneath her drooping lids.

"For Judith, to be sure," De Heem agreed; for of a sudden he saw that this way was safety.

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It mattered little if he got a share of the price of the tulip, but in it he was sure lay Judith's deliverance from his yoke. It must be taken from her, at least until such time as she was safely wedded to Carolus. He therefore turned to the woman beside him with more interest.

"What you say is wise," he told her, "but my wife's niece is headstrong and set upon managing her own affairs. For me to make a suggestion is to insure its rejection; yet I have come far to be of use to her."

"Let not her childish peevishness deter you," Lady Bellomont said. "In the end she must thank you."

"What is it you would suggest?" De Heem asked, benevolence radiating from him. "I am well satisfied that you would advise me only for the young girl's good."

"The tulips should be lifted and set out of danger," her ladyship said smoothly. "Where they are now, a rooting pig might make an end of them."

De Heem shrugged his shoulders regretfully.

"'Tis a good thought," he acknowledged, "though I had not the wit to come by it without

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you; but, for me, 't is impossible. I am a guest here and have no private place to guard the bulbs."

"My friend," Lady Bellomont's voice was as sweet as strained honey, "who is fitter than the governor of the Province to undertake such a trust? Our house is open to you, night or day." She swept from her side to receive his wife's curtesies, and De Heem stood where she had left him deep in the possibilities her words had suggested.

In the confusion attendant upon the arrival of Vrouw de Heem and the tea-board with *izer-kookies*, nut-cakes, and *oblies*, Nan rolled out from under the table where she had been soothing Krumm, whose dislike of De Heem was ever ready to burst forth. No one paid her much heed, which was as well, for her face was a tale-bearer.

The tea-party, despite the pewter, went on right merrily, although Marya did seize an opportunity to whisper in Tom's ear a query as to when he had seen the Van Taarl silver last.

"'T is all base metal here," she giggled. "I

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wonder hath she turned her table service into coin to hoard with her other wealth."

The suggestion was not a welcome one to Tom, who well remembered the richness of the fittings on the day Judith had been set free of the Lords Orphan Masters; yet it seemed to him that Marya was base herself, to eat Judith's food and sneer at her behind her back.

"Have you ever heard that he who shares the Arab's bread and salt for that day is accounted and counts himself a friend?" he asked the girl coldly.

"And so am I Judith's friend. Am I not of her own Company?" Marya said, round-eyed and innocent. "Surely 't is not the best friend who holds us faultless, thus giving us no opportunity to improve."

"You scarce give her that opportunity when you fault her unheard," Tom pointed out. "Would it not be better—"

Marya flirted around on one red heel, giving her full skirts a telling twirl.

"Oh, *wae!*" she exclaimed, "you are like to my sister, who can stand no hint that Judith is

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not perfection. I had liefer talk to the Jonchere de Heem, who is a man of the world and, having looked into more than one pair of eyes in his day, can hear me without prejudice. Had he a wondrous flower such as Judith's he would not part with it for unneeded money, nor would I."

She slipped across the summer-house to seat herself beside Carolus's cup, he having left it to attend for a moment or two on Lady Bellomont.

That lady, having had her tea, was growing tired of the provincial company, so she rose, seizing Judith by the arm.

"After I have eaten I walk for my figure's sake," she said amiably. "You are too young, my dear, to be put to such expedients; but, as none of my attendants are here, I pray you will wait upon me while I pace about your grounds. No, no!" she motioned the others to resume their places, "my little hostess is all the companion I need, and I would not spoil your pleasant gathering where each lady hath her swain."

Together she and Judith paced slowly around the garden, the girl determined to hold her peace until Lady Bellomont had said her say, for if she

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had forgotten Robin there was no need to remind her of him.

"It was deplorable that your friend, the pirate, fled ere we questioned him," Lady Bellomont broke the silence when they were beyond hearing of the others and at once dispelled this hope. She had not forgotten. Now it remained to make her believe, and it were possible, that Robin's tale was true. Judith made all haste to speak promptly, lest she arouse a suspicion that she pondered her answer.

"I questioned him before he sailed," she said. "He has no secret, if we except the secret that he is no pirate."

"What is your riddle?" Lady Bellomont asked, coldly suspicious at once.

"'Tis no riddle," Judith said; "simply the truth. He made up the tale that he once was a pirate to amuse the children and silly women." Yet, as she said it, she realized how unreal it sounded and did not blame the governor's lady for doubting the story.

"In sooth," she went on, "I know that the words from my lips are cold and unconvincing, but I believed the man. He greatly feared the

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story would get out to destroy the character of romance he had invented."

"But what need to run away?" Lady Bellomont asked, still unsatisfied.

Judith started. She had not asked herself this question. Surely, if Robin were as innocent as he said, he need not conceal himself. Then she thought of Metje and was ready to laugh. He had wanted a good excuse for taking employment near her.

"Did he run away?" she asked. "I think not. Sailors are not very provident, and it is possible that empty pockets sent him to work. Indeed I can say no more save that he convinced me of his good faith, and I am sorry that I can cry you no better news."

At this Lady Bellomont, who for the moment had given up hope, showed her a white face and wrung her hands nervously.

"I will not stay here. I will not! I will not! I hate this town and I hate its people, who turn their flat Dutch faces the other way when I drive by and drink Colonel Fletcher's health to spite my husband."

It was plain the noble lady was greatly over-

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wrought. Used to pleasure and admiration, the life of a great city and of a court, it was not strange that she found little to compensate for the loss of such delights in a provincial residency, where her husband was busy far into the night with affairs of state and she sat alone and desolate.

"Money I must and will have," she declared passionately. "'T is your Dutch king of England sends us here into exile, and 't is no more than just that his Dutch subjects should pay well for our services. We owe them naught of kindness; that all must allow."

"I do not catch your ladyship's meaning," Judith said, a trifle coldly, "but I must remind you that I myself am Dutch. Although the news I brought you is unwelcome, yet it is true news and was not come by without trouble."

"Yes, yes," her ladyship returned indifferently, "doubtless you think it true. You're but a child, easy to delude, yet I would have you remember that you had a chance to aid me and you let it slip. And now my coach is come and I am going."

The others hurried to bid her farewell, and all

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the gentlemen attended her to her coach; but it was on Here de Heem's arm that she placed the tips of her fingers as she walked down the bricked path, and it was he who leaned through the window to hear her last words.

"Be guided by me," she said softly. "Do not let that child destroy valuable property, even though it be her own. Surely we can better guard it for her."

Before De Heem could reply the horses started and the coach clattered off over the cobbles.

CHAPTER XVII

IN WHICH A PLOT UNFOLDS

“**W**HAT, think you, brought her ladyship here?” Blandina asked Judith, as, with linked arms, they walked back to the summer-house.

“I fancy she is lonesome,” the girl replied evasively. “I am sorry for the poor creature. She seems to suffer from the unpopularity of the Governor and her lack of friends.”

“I’m not sorry for her,” Blandina said; “no, not at all. She has her husband and her children and her house to order. What more does any Dutch lady need?”

“But she is not a Dutch lady,” Judith laughed, “an ’t is plain that she is used to luxuries and pleasures that she lacks here. In truth she told me that if she had a fortune she would implore her husband to go home.”

“Then keep a watch on your tulip,” Blandina

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warned her unexpectedly. "I am quite sure she hath set covetous eyes upon it."

"The tulip!" Judith cried amazed. "Nay, she was not interested in it. The English do not value such things as we do. She never gave it a second thought."

"Indeed you are mistaken," Blandina replied nervously. "She asked Marya to show her where it was planted. I wished she had directed her wrong, or at least had been less particular about it. But you know Marya's way with any one grand. 'T is strange to me that so sweet a girl should be so silly."

While this was going on in the summer-house Metje was out back having a word with Robin.

"To-day we are honored," she said grimly. "The Governor's lady is here again and there's talk on all sides of the tulip my young mistress sets such store by. They say it's worth a mort of money, Robin."

"Then trouble yourself not about it," he said comfortably. "One of those robbers, De Heem or the Lady Bellomont, will rid her of it shortly. Look rather at those birds; they show a change

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of weather. They are gulls, Metje, free to come and go over the clean blue water. You've crossed the ocean, girl. Dost never long for the smell of it? For the slap of a wave on the side, for—"

"Nay, then," said Metje, "pull up, Robin. This is no time for backsliding. I 've work for you to do to-night."

"Work for me?" Robin spoke aggrievedly. "Dost never like to see a man tip back his chair and smoke a pipe? You drive me all day till my back is like to break and I have n't the spirit in me to backslide."

"Now that's too bad," said Metje, "for the work I've planned for you is not such as Sister Kate would favor. Rather is it fitted to the days that are gone."

At this Robin could not conceal a start; then he shook his head.

"Small chance of your helping me to real work," he said, with pretended hopelessness. "There's no such luck for me. Your liking is for seeing me so besmeared with this loving stuff"—he lifted a handful of the soft soil and threw

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it down again,—“that I myself know not Robin Marrow. Nay, nay, ’t is gardening by moonlight you ’ll be setting me on to do.”

“Now how knew you that?” Metje asked, looking at him as though she thought him a wizard. “Not that I think there ’ll be much moonlight. The moon changeth, and with it the weather, or I miss my guess.”

“So the gulls said.”

“I ’ve no faith in them, but the blacker the night the better for your task.”

“Woman,” said Robin, “I pray you tell your tale. I had no hope of lustier employ, so I am none disappointed.”

“’T is easy told,” said Metje brazenly. “I want you to steal the mistress’s tulips.”

“Now that,” said Robin, “I did not expect. Nor do I love it now I ’ve got it. ’T is not like thee, Metje, my lass, to bite the hand that feeds thee.”

“She feed me,” cried Metje. “’T is I feed her. But that ’s neither here nor there. Let ’s put it that I myself am minded for once to backslide. The tulips must be stolen. Wilt do it for me or must I e’en do it alone?”

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"Nay," Robin objected, "I've gold for gewgaws at thy pleasure."

"I want no gold from you," declared Metje angrily. "I want those tulips, and naught else will do me."

"Eh, lass," said Robin dolefully, "'t is my wild talk hath turned thee from thy duty, I that had rather cut out my tongue than that it should lead thee wrong. Thou art not like me, streaked good and bad as bacon is striped with fat and lean; thou art all clear good, and cannot talk of backsliding who hath never done a wrong."

"'T is never too late to learn, they say." Metje hid a grin at his earnestness. "An thou hast turned timid, there are other lads of spirit I can call on. For one, there's Pieter van der Poel, who waits at the City Tavern."

"Let him wait!" shouted Robin. "I'll crack his silly pate if he dares so much as to look at yon tulips."

"'T is a mean spirit that refuseth help, nor is willing that another shall do what he hath not the daring to attempt."

"The daring, say you?" Robin snatched the words from her mouth. "What risk need I run?"

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'T is one of the things that sickens me of the job. Krumm knows me. The young mistress trusts me. Were I caught in the very act I would only need to say that I planned to lift the bulbs to protect them from thieves and she would take my word for 't."

"Aye, that she would," Metje nodded complacently. "I had thought of all that in making my plan. Now this is what you must do. I will leave a spade and an iron bucket without the door, for we must be most particular to do the flowers no hurt. Then, when the watch hath passed on its rounds, you must slip from outside over the wall in the shade of yon tree, which is well advanced for the season, breaking a branch to show where you came in and throw suspicion on a stranger. If you are seen, I 'll tell the truth, that you came for the flowers at my bidding, thinking to save them from those having designs on them."

"The truth?" cried Robin. "The truth? O Metje, lass, is this indeed the truth?"

He seized her by the arms and looked into her eyes, regardless of the fact they would be seen if those in the summer-house glanced in their direction.

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Metje, however, had not lost sight of the others and tore herself out of his grasp hastily.

"Well are you named Simple Simon," she said, "For it takes little skill to gull you. Dost think that I would wrong the *juffer* after all these years by her side? But of late I've come to see that she is under some kind of a vow to her father and is not rich as I have thought her. These De Heems she would rid herself of an she were able, and 't is my belief that she counteth on the tulip to turn the scale for her. That being the case, we must save it; for, as you justly said, with two such foxes as the *here* and the governor's lady on the scent, it is far from safe."

"We'll save it for her, Metje," Robin declared, now as hot for the plan as he had been cold before, "but can we move the bulbs without harm to them?"

"I will water them to-night," Metje explained. "As you say, this soil is loving stuff, yet around the tulips we have limed it well, so take care to dig both wide and deep in case there should be droppers. I think if you dig around them so"—she took his spade and dug deeply in a circle,—“and if the earth holds to the bulbs as

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it should, being sticky with moisture, we'll do no harm."

"At least 't is worth the risk, for otherwise she will have no bulbs," Robin said, and thus the plan was agreed upon.

In the summer-house the guests were making ready for departure, Tom and Carolus having volunteered to walk home with the Jaspyn girls. While the older members of the party had laughed and talked, Nan had seated herself on the step to share her *kookies* with Krumm. At first she had been impatient for the others to be gone, so that she might run to Judith with the tale of what she had overheard, but soon she found reasons for doing naught of the sort.

"An I tell Judith," she said to herself, "full well do I know what she will do. She will make light of it, thinking I have misunderstood, for is not the Here de Heem in some sort her uncle? And he might be acting in good faith, yet if the tulips fall into her ladyship's hands I fear nor Judith nor he will get any profit of them." The child knit her brows and turned this over in her head. "Should I insist that there was danger, she would set Robin to watch, and this I will not

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have. He likes such employ too well. I have done with putting him in the way of temptation, and there must be some better plan."

For some time she continued to puzzle over the situation but at last jumped to her feet and raced off, followed by Krumm. Metje and Robin she saw in the garden. Peeping into the kitchen she discovered her nurse nodding by the fire, and slipped away without disturbing her to enter the out-kitchen, where she seized upon a good-sized pot with a handle. Then she opened the door of the shed where garden tools were kept, found a spudd and put it in the pot, hiding both under the Persian lilac bush, after which she danced off with Krumm, very well pleased with herself and for the moment without a care, to find the other guests departed.

Tom and Blandina led the way over the big cobbles that made walking in most of the streets of New Yorke far from a pleasure. However, they were used to such going and managed to keep up a conversation, notwithstanding the necessity of picking their foot-steps.

Blandina it was who opened the subject of the tulip, being still worried that her sister had

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brought the matter so particularly to Lady Bellomont's attention.

"I would that Marya were not so forward with other people's business," she sighed. "Often do I regret that she was not entered in a younger Company, for 't is her youth, most like, that maketh her so rash."

"You mean about the tulip. I don't think Lady Bellomont would value it."

"She would value anything worth money," Blandina assured him sharply. "I tried to convince Judith of this, but she would not listen. She is too sweet and true to suspect guile in others."

"Yet she seems to have a just appreciation of the worth of her belongings," Tom began, but Blandina turned on him, with a spirit unlooked for in the placid Dutch girl.

"And now you sing Marya's song!" she cried indignantly. "Would you like it better if Judith were a spendthrift and scattered her fortune? What right have Marya and you to judge her, who know not for what high purpose she may plan to use her wealth?"

"Juffrouw Jaspyn, you are in the right of it,"

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Tom said humbly. "Moreover I agree with you that this tulip should be protected. Lady Bellomont is a devious woman."

But Tom had criticized her friend. Say what he might, he felt that he had fallen in Blandina's regard.

"Now go I home to a scolding," Marya had whispered to Carolus, as the gate closed behind them. "I know my sister well. She will to *moeder* with a tale of how I pushed myself forward in your—in Lady Bellomont's regard."

"For Lady Bellomont I cannot speak, but in my regard—what need to push forward where one already leads the way?" Carolus's tone was so light and mocking that even Marya could not take it seriously. She menaced him playfully with her fan; then raised it to shade her eyes as she went on.

"That will not be the only count against me. Her ladyship is my friend and I trust her, but she hath many enemies especially among the truly Dutch; and I shall be blamed that I gossiped of Judith's flower, when, in truth, my love of tulips is so great that I was carried away and thought not at all to whom I spoke."

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"But what harm could it do to speak of the tulip to Lady Bellomont?" Carolus asked puzzled.

"'T is vile gossip such as I thank heaven never passeth my lips about a fellow-being," Marya said piously, "yet there be those who say that her ladyship is needy, with vast gambling debts in England. They say she borrows without the intent to return. Now *I* trust her, and I am sure that she would no more plot against the possessions of another than would—than would your own father."

"Humm," said Carolus, "'t is indeed a convincing comparison you have hit upon."

And so they reached the Jaspyn house and parted.

Meanwhile Vrouw de Heem, loudly chanting Lady Bellomont's praises, had entered the house to make Metje and Nurse Kate her audience, and Judith hastened to set Nan at a lesson; but the child, with a finger marking her place, turned to her with a wrinkled brow.

"Judith," she said, "have I surprised a secret? Is that strange tulip of vast importance to you?"

For a moment Judith hesitated. True to her father's commands, she had taken no one into her

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confidence, but this child loved her and moreover would scarce understand all that the words conveyed.

"It has come true, Nan, and that means that I will soon be free from bondage." What more she might have said was interrupted by a great noise as Krumm attacked some one on the other side of the house.

Nan was off like an arrow from the bow, and Judith, not slow to follow her, arrived in time to see her seize the hound, of whom she had no fear, as he was menacing Here de Heem for striking at him with his staff.

"Bid him cease," she panted, as Judith reached her side. "Krumm will not stand much more."

"Here de Heem," cried Judith, "do you not see that you are enraging the dog? He will not submit to chastisement from a stranger."

"Indeed, then," De Heem shouted, "'t is I who will not submit to his harrying me. I may not stroll about the place but he is at my side, watching my every movement. I will not submit to it, and so I warn you."

"I regret that Krumm annoys you," Judith said coldly. "Moeye Beletje and your son have

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both made friends with him, as I urged you to do. However, for the short time you will still be here, I shall see that he is chained during the hours you select for your strolls."

This was a concession she was loth to make, and it was only wrung from her because she had been frightened by Krumm's fury and feared he might harm De Heem, yet the man was not at all pacified by it.

"What mean you by the 'short time' we shall still be here?" he demanded. "Here we will be till you and Carolus are wed. Both you and he may as well rid your thoughts of silly fancies and make up your minds to that. Full well you know that all your father's outstanding accounts have been settled and that you cannot pay me, else you would have done so ere this. So there's naught for it but to marry Carolus to you, and see that he sets aside the remainder due out of your income."

"Do you think to marry me to Carolus and to enslave me too?" Judith looked at the man with something very close to loathing. "Thank God, I can pay! I am sure I can." She turned and followed Nan, who was already making off around the house with Krumm.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN WHICH THE DRAGON TULIP DISAPPEARS

THAT night the weather changed as Metje had predicted. There was no storm, but the wind was wet and sighing and the moon was obscured by clouds.

The party in the *voorhuis* separated after supper was cleared away—Aunt Beletje to bed, Carolus to his room with a candle to light his chess-board, and Metje to the kitchen fire. Here de Heem surprised Judith by saying that he had an appointment to smoke a pipe with a friend. He took the key of the front door from the lock and went outside, to return at once.

“I must ask,” he said, courteously enough, “that you tie up your hound. He likes me not, as you know. And it would scarce be safe for me to attempt to enter at an unwonted hour.”

After the encounter of the afternoon Judith was inclined to agree with this, and she accord-

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ingly replied that Krumm should be attended to. The dog lay before the kitchen fire, keeping Metje company, and she gave her woman instructions to chain him to his house before she too retired; then, feeling that the day had been a very long one, the girl climbed the stairs to bed and was soon deep in sleep.

From this heavy slumber she was roused, it seemed to her dulled senses, by a scream. She sat up in her bed, listening intently.

"Metje," she said, "Metje, what's o'clock? I was dreaming. I thought I heard Nan call."

There was no answer from Metje, who was ever hard to waken; and Judith lay down again, soon drifting off into a light sleep. From this she was aroused in good earnest by Krumm's deep bark, the noise of flying feet, a fall, and growls, all added to the sound of a more distant conflict in the garden.

On the instant she was broad awake. The tulip, her precious tulip! Why had she not heeded Blandina's warning that it might be in danger?

"Metje!" she cried despairingly, and pushed back her bed-curtains to look for her woman; but

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Metje was not at her side. The trundle-bed had been pulled out before Judith had blown out her candle, yet her eyes, accustomed to the dark, showed her now that it was empty.

Assured of this, the girl jumped out of her own bed, thrust her feet into *pantoffels*, and huddled on a gown. Then she ran downstairs. A flaring light in the kitchen drew her that way, to find the room empty and the door swinging wide. Not knowing what to do, she hesitated on the threshold when Robin, Metje, and Carolus came in upon her, talking volubly.

"You 'd beaten him off, sir, or ever I was over the wall," mourned Robin. "Indeed I have no luck at all nowadays."

"I heard some one sneaking past under my window," Carolus explained. "I ran downstairs in my bare feet, not to alarm the ladies; but the front door was locked and no key in it. I had to open a window to get out. That gave the varlet warning, and he ran. I only caught him at the gate, to find he was empty-handed. But where was Krumm to allow such a visitor to pass?"

"Krumm was chained," said Metje, "but his tongue was free. I'll loose him."

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"Nay," Judith affirmed, "he was loose. He growled under my window. What I want to know is, is the tulip safe?"

Robin and Metje exchanged glances, she questioning, he denying.

"'T is sure to be safe, missy," he told her. "The young master here was too quick for the thief."

"I'll not be able to believe it till I see it." Judith spoke nervously. "Take a brand from the fire and light a lanthorn. I'll have a look at the beds. Perchance they were trampled under foot in your fracas."

"Fear not," Carolus tried to reassure her, "the man was stooping there or thereabouts when I dropped from the window, but he ran and I met him in the path. Why was the front door locked and Krumm chained?"

"Surely you knew that your father was abroad?" said Judith in surprise. "He hath the key and asked that I tie Krumm up."

"My father out, you say?" Carolus spoke as one almost stunned by the news. "Nay, I knew it not."

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By this time Robin had lit a lanthorn, and they all set out together across the grass, where Judith halted them.

“Krumm?” she said inquiringly. “You chained him, Metje? Then where is he that he doth not give tongue at our light moving in the grounds. I must look into this.” She turned and walked towards the dog’s kennel, where a broken chain was all she found.

“I knew it!” she exclaimed. “He is beneath my window. I heard him there as I dressed; but when you said that he was chained I thought that I had befooled myself.”

She began to run and the others after her and, sure enough, on the sward below her window they made out the dog, crouched above the form of a man.

Judith was the first by his side and, slipping her hand within the hound’s collar twisted the broken chain around her other hand, expecting to have difficulty in forcing him from his prey; but he obeyed her instantly, rising deliberately just as Robin’s lanthorn lit up the face and prostrate form of Here de Heem.

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"How did this come about?" Carolus asked in a strained tone, as he helped his father to his feet. "I see you are unhurt."

"This dangerous brute attacked me as I said he would and bore me to the ground," Here de Heem snarled.

"Did you come in by the back, then?" Judith inquired.

"I did not," said De Heem. "I found your front gate flung wide."

"Then you passed the *stoep* by chance in the bad light?" the girl demanded, trying to banish suspicion from her voice.

"If you will let me tell my tale you will soon know why I'm here," De Heem said, "though, having left that wild beast at large to spite me, you little deserve my care for your property. The gate being open, I feared that pigs or goats might have come in, and I was taking a look about to make sure all was safe when this creature came at me and overthrew me."

"Then you saw naught of the man near the tulip-beds?" Carolus asked sharply.

"Was there a man?" his father inquired. "No, I saw no one; only the ground over that way felt

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underfoot as if the hogs had rooted there."

"Come quickly, Robin," cried Judith. "I must make sure all is as it should be ere I can sleep."

She seized the lanthorn and, followed by Metje and Robin, ran across the grass to the tulip-bed.

One glance was enough. The precious tulips were gone.

For a moment Judith stood as if stunned; then she walked into the house and up the stairs to her room without a word.

Behind her the De Heems faced each other in anger.

"Is this your work?" Carolus demanded.

"Very well done, sir," De Heem replied. "I congratulate you; but you cannot impose upon me. It is not my work for one most exceeding good reason. 'Tis the early bird who gets the worm, and you were before me, sir."

He swung on his heel, stalked to the *stoep*, unlocked the front door, and shut and locked it behind him, leaving Carolus on the outside.

Carolus watched this proceeding with entire indifference; then went back to the kitchen to

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confer with Robin, who meanwhile was standing where Judith had left him, deep in converse with Metje.

"I thought you signed to me that you had it not," she had whispered to him as Judith entered the house.

"In faith, so I did," Robin answered. "I had just climbed the wall when the young gentleman dropped from the window."

"Rob, Rob!" exclaimed Metje, "is it sooth you are saying, or can it be that you have backslid again?"

"As well might I charge you with the robbery," cried Robin indignantly. "Nay, Metje, an you trust me so little, there is naught I can say will convince you; but I am an honest pirate for all you misdoubt me." He was turning away without another word when his foot struck something in the grass and he picked it up. "What 's this?" he asked.

"'T is too dark to see," Metje answered. "Come to the kitchen. When I look in your eyes I will know if I can trust you or no."

"If you know not that already 't is no fault of

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mine,” Robin grumbled, but he followed her to the house for all that.

Carolus met them ere they reached the door.

“We must recover this flower,” he began abruptly, when his eye chanced on the thing Robin carried in his hand and straightway he forgot all else.

“Where found you that?” he demanded, taking it to the light to examine it. “Hath Lady Bello-mont perchance a tiny foot?”

“Nay, she’s a buxom wench,” Metje said simply.

“Then what do you make of that?” Carolus asked, motioning her to look at what he held close under the light. “’T is much too small for Judith—for the Juffrouw Van Taarl.”

Metje took the little slipper in her broad hands and looked it up and down.

“This is no mystery,” she said, with a smile at men’s stupidity. “’T is the child’s slipper. Well I know those buckles. ’T is Nan’s.”

But at her words the others stared at her and it seemed as if their faces whitened in the flickering light.

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“The little lady’s?” cried Robin. “Art sure, lass?”

“Little Nan’s,” said Carolus. “No mystery, say you?” and together, as with one voice, he and Robin whispered, “How came it here?”

CHAPTER XIX

IN WHICH A NIGHT SEES SEVERAL VISITORS

METJE had grown so used to watching Nan about the place at work or play that to find an article of her wear at hand had seemed natural enough. However it needed but the men's words to jar her out of her complacency. Her eyes widened and Robin clapped his hand across her mouth to still a possible shriek.

"Steady, lass! Steady!" he said. "If things be as I think and fear, we'll have need of all our wits this night."

Then turning to Carolus he addressed him straightforwardly.

"Sir," he said, "I take you to be a true man. Do we follow this affair side by side wherever it may lead?"

For all answer Carolus held out his hand and Robin gripped it.

"Now, without offense," he asked, "dost see

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the work of the Here de Heem in this matter?"

"I have asked myself that," Carolus replied honestly, "but I cannot charge him with it. I think, mayhap, he hath the tulip hidden somewhere, and may not have been averse to having another discovered at the bed, in order that suspicion should be drawn away from his own guilt; but the child, no! I don't think he has touched her. What motive could he have?"

"If she had caught him in the act—" Robin began. "But no, I am with you in this case. I scarce think he would harm the child."

Judith had gone to her room stunned by her loss; but it was not long before she began to recover sufficiently to cast about in her mind angrily for the author of the theft. She had to acknowledge that it might be Lady Bellomont; but the weight of her suspicion pointed to the Here de Heem and, that thought growing into a certainty in her mind, the next step was a longing to circumvent him. He had the plant, but she had the picture, duly attested on the back (for her father had seen to that), and there might be a way to make it of use to prove her property if an attempt was made to sell the bulbs. She had the picture,

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she told herself—but had she? She had left it without even the precaution of a lock, in a drawer of the desk in the office, and it was on that side of the house that Krumm had attacked De Heem. Had the dog had reason for this attack?

Blaming herself for her careless folly she lit a candle and again descended the stair. The moment she unlocked the office door she saw that the window had been opened. True, it was barred, but it was now an easy matter for one standing outside to insert an arm and open the desk drawers. Her heart sank like lead, for one of the top drawers stood ajar.

To be sure there was naught there of value. She held aloft her candle and looked within. There were some wafers, the mother-of-pearl fish Dacosta had given her; but she wasted little time over these things. It was the lower drawer she was interested in, and she pulled it out hastily. There lay the picture undisturbed. She snatched it up at once, running with it to her father's money-box, where she locked it away with fingers that trembled. Then she went back to the desk and stood there for a moment. It seemed to her that she could see De Heem interrupted by the dog

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in his attempt to find the picture. Again she idly pulled out the drawers, telling herself that the picture was assuredly the object of whoever had opened the window, for naught else was gone. Yet of a sudden she missed something, for had she not put Dacosta's seal there with the fish, thinking to examine it at her leisure?

"I wish the thief joy of it," she said, with a shrug. "Perchance he can interpret it."

Dacosta had not answered her note about the tulip, but she had not sent the fish with it. She picked it up now and weighed it in her hand; then, putting it back, was about to return upstairs when she made out the various voices in the kitchen. She still was minded to go to her room again until she caught the words, "Our first need is to know the truth about the child."

"The child! Nan!" she was already in the kitchen as she spoke. "What's wrong with her?" She looked from one to another appealingly. "Can't you speak?" she cried.

"'T is just that we found her shoe out near the posies," Robin said. "'T is a puzzle to account for its being there."

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"'Tis no puzzle to me," Judith declared in a tone of relief, after a moment's thought. "Heaven send she's lifted them carefully."

"What is in your mind?" Carolus asked.

"Nan has an unflattering opinion of Lady Bellomont," Judith told him, "and to-day she learned how greatly I counted on the sale of my dragon tulips. I doubt not that she and Nurse Kate have come by stealth and taken them to Mistress Homan's for safe-keeping."

They all considered this idea for a moment.

"It would explain why Krumm never gave tongue," said Metje thoughtfully.

"Kate likes not the dark," Robin contributed, "but, an the little lady commandeth, she must be obeyed."

"No, no, no!" cried Carolus impatiently. "Nan would not go from here without her shoe of her own will."

"The pebbles of the road are hard," said Metje, and of a sudden took to weeping at the thought of Nan's soft little foot.

"Come, Robin," Judith pulled his sleeve, "We'll to Mistress Homan's at once. 'Tis bet-

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ter to arouse the house on a fool's errand than to waste precious time in case our worst fears are justified."

"That is my thought," Carolus agreed, "but it may rain at any minute. There is no need for you to go, when Robin and I are here to do your bidding."

"I could not stay at home." Judith dismissed all protests, but agreed to let Metje fit her out against the weather.

"And you, sir?" Robin suggested, looking down at his companion's bare feet. "And have you any weapons? If not, I can supply you."

"I have my own harness and equipment," Carolus replied. "Thank you. A man works best with his own tools."

Robin said no more, but while the younger De Heem went to get his gear he smiled, well satisfied. He had not mistaken his man.

The little party was soon on the road and met not so much as the watch ere they reached the house in the Waal Straat, where Robin rapped smartly.

In a minute an upper window was thrown wide and a head was thrust forth.

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"Get ye gone from here, ye wastrels," Nurse Kate said in a trembling voice, "ere I spring a rattle for the watch!" Then, espying her brother's burly form, she lost all fear and became angry. "How now?" she cried. "Art so lost to shame that thou bringest thy boon companions here to wake honest folk from their sweet sleep? Hast no respect for my mistress that the whole house trembles with thy knockings? I bid thee begone ere I empty the water jug on thy head."

"And I bid thee be silent," Robin began, but Judith stopped him. The clouds had parted and a watery ray of moonlight shone down upon her as she threw back her hood and called.

"'T is I, nurse. The Juffrouw Van Taarl. I've come to ask but one question. Where is Nan?"

"Where she should be, the sweet lamb," Kate replied, much surprised to find such a visitor at so untimely an hour. "In her innocent bed."

"Art sure of that?" Judith asked, instant relief in her voice.

"Sure am I that I tucked her up hours ago," the woman replied a trifle tartly. "Think you,

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mistress, that I am not to be trusted in her mother's absence?"

"Then her mother is away?" Judith inquired quickly, and Robin, speaking aside to Carolus, said, "Thank fortune for that!"

"Aye, she and the master are off again to visit friends in the Jerseys," Nurse Kate said, "and if it be that she wants an eye on me while she's junketing, I'll ope the door and ye shall see for yourself."

"We can see the old fool thou art from here," Robin told her brotherlywise. "Go thou in to the little mistress's room. An she's asleep there, come and tell us so with a chastened tongue, and we'll be off to our own beds in great contentment."

Grumbling to herself his sister left the window, and they waited in silence for her report. A loud scream told them what to expect, and a moment later they heard the woman come stumbling down the stairs to let them in.

"She's gone!" she gasped. "And the clothes I'd laid out for morning with her. How knew you this, Rob Marrow? I'll have none of your

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backslidings where the little mistress is concerned."

"I told you you were a fool," Robin retorted angrily. "Every hair on her head I love, and I'll have her back though I swing for it."

"But how to set to work?" Carolus spoke slowly and deliberately to give all a chance to come to themselves. "That is the question. We must make no missteps." Then, turning to Nurse Kate, he asked, "Have you any idea what has happened to your little mistress?"

The woman was in tears by now.

"There are none in this part of the house save us two," she sobbed. "The maids I lock in the loft, so that they shall not go junketing while my mistress is away. I sleep on a pallet in her room to guard her possessions, and the child's bed is in the chamber adjoining. I sleep so lightly I can hear a bat flit by outside. I know not how the little lady ever passed the stairs without disturbing me."

"Then you judge there was no struggle?"

"She went of her own will, I am assured. For one thing, she stopped to take her cloak from

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its hook here by the stair. For another, this door, which I had locked and chained myself, was open to the world. You could have entered had you been so minded."

"'T is my belief that she went to save my tulips," Judith said. "Think you she was taken right there in my own garden? Nay, then, how shall I forgive Krumm that he gave us no warning?"

"She had bade him be silent, most like," the nurse whimpered. "She was masterful all her life, and I ne'er saw anything to match the way that beast obeyed her lightest word."

"There's little sense in wasting time here," said Carolus impatiently. "Since it is plain that Nurse Kate knows naught that will be of service to us, we must be about our business; but first we will leave you at home," he added to Judith.

"I've no fear of the dark," the girl told him quickly. "I would that I could go with you; but I can see I might hamper you."

"It lies on our way to leave you at the gate," Carolus reminded her; and they moved off together, promising Kate instant news of any development.

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"What think you should be our first step?" Robin asked in puzzlement. "We must make a plan; but I'm not so good at that as at the doing."

"Do you know any men, soldiers or servants, employed about the fort?" Carolus inquired.

"I know well one lad. A prentice on a ship I sailed on once, who, beside being a runner, is in her ladyship's private employ; but naught would tempt an honest lad like that to lift his hand against a child," Robin averred.

They had almost reached the Van Taarl gateway when they saw a dark figure slip out of it and make off at a good pace down the street. Leaving Judith to her own devices the two men started in pursuit and were rapidly overhauling their quarry when he turned a corner to run into the arms of the watch.

Carolus and Robin crashed into the group before they could stop themselves, and whether Tom Lane or they were the more surprised it would be hard to say. Carolus, however, was the first to find his tongue.

"We ran after you, Master Lane," he said

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pleasantly, "and I fear gave you some reason for alarm. Did you take us for foot-pads?"

"I knew not who was coming floundering after me," Tom returned a trifle sullenly, "so, being unarmed, I sought safety in flight." He eyed the weapons carried by Carolus and Robin with a certain questioning.

"There is a matter we wish to talk to you about," Carolus resumed, ignoring Tom's ill humor, "but I see no reason for stopping the watch on its rounds." He opened his purse and a coin changed hands. "'T is like to be wet and chill ere morning. That 's to drink our healths when duty permits."

"Thank you, young sir," the man mumbled, "but I know you not nor whose health to drink."

"I 'm Carolus de Heem, lately from Holland, visiting my cousin, the Juffrouw Van Taarl," Carolus told him readily. "And this is her man, Simon Gobbet."

This seemed to satisfy the watchman, who went on his way, the light of his lanthorn shining here and there and the tapping of his iron-shod staff plainly audible, till a pause was made at a

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corner to cry, "Two o'clock of a cloudy morning, and all 's well!"

These words seemed to release the tongues of those who had remained behind in silence, and Tom spoke sulkily to Carolus.

"If 't is in your mind that I had aught to do with the disappearance of the tulips, take me to Mistress Van Taarl. I will explain to her."

"How knew you that the tulips were gone, lad?" Robin asked curiously. "Hast come from the house at this hour?"

"I will answer no questions save to Mistress van Taarl," Tom returned stubbornly.

"I cannot think that very friendly," Carolus said. "Moreover, you are too quick to fancy yourself suspect. The tulips were gone hours since."

"They were?" cried Tom. "But, if you did n't think I had them, why did you chase me?"

"We knew not 't was you, or we might have saved our legs by calling on you to stop," Carolus explained. "We saw you run from the gate and thought you a marauder; for you will own 't is scarce the usual hour to visit a lady."

"Nay, then," Robin chuckled, "full many a call

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have I and my jew's-harp paid 'neath ladies' windows; the later the better, say I. But we waste time here, master." He gave a twitch to Carolus's sleeve as a further reminder of the business that was toward.

"I'm coming," Carolus replied, "yet 't is in my mind to ask Master Lane if he knows aught of the disappearance of Nan Homan."

For just a space there was utter silence. The three stood close together, straining their eyes through the dark to make out, if possible, each other's features. When Tom replied he spoke stammeringly.

"What? What's that, you say. Little Nan gone! Where has she gone? Who would harm the child?"

"Ods-blood, master!" Robin cried impatiently, "Why ask such windy questions? The child is not at home and has been here. We go to seek news of her."

"And I will go with you!" Tom cried eagerly.

"No!" Carolus spoke sharply. "We want not your company."

"If 't is Lady Bellomont who hath seized her, I can lead you to the oast-house where I was held

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for a space by her runners," Tom pleaded. "I am trained in arms. I might be of service in a crisis."

"You might and you might not," Carolus answered. "'T is in my mind that Robin and I are enough for the game we have toward."

"Then I'll go alone," cried Tom angrily.

"Spoken like a young fool," Carolus said coldly. "You are unarmed, yet you talk of pushing into a matter that may need seasoned fighting men."

"Such as *you* are," Tom interrupted. "Winner of a thousand battles on a chess-board! What right have you to refuse my help?"

"The right of any leader to use only the weapons that fit his hand," Carolus replied. "If I fail, it may be your turn to try. That is, if you can muster any influence among the English to bring your proud Bellomonts to reason."

With which words Robin and he made off into the night, leaving Tom standing where they had met him.

At home, meanwhile, Judith and Metje had stirred the embers of the kitchen fire and sat before it, having given up all thought of going to bed. They had brought Krumm in for company

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and were busily going over and over all they knew of the disappearance of both the tulips and Nan, when the dog leaped to his feet, the hairs on his back erect and his teeth bared.

The women also jumped up and drew together, but, hearing nothing, would have seated themselves again, had not Krumm refused to be pacified. It was plainly his desire to be let out, but this Judith would not allow.

"He is the only protector we have left," she said, "for I do not count upon my aunt's husband; but Krumm can account for one man at least and I shall keep him by me."

They waited expectantly for some time but, as nothing happened, Metje put on another log, naming it as the last they had within doors; and they settled to wait for news or daylight, they knew not which to expect first. Krumm, too, again relaxed his vigilance and stretched his great frame in front of the fire. Thus five minutes wore away.

"How slowly the sand seems to run when one is anxious." Judith sighed at last, tapping the glass with her fingernail as if to hasten it.

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"It seems half a lifetime since this afternoon. I wish something would happen."

As if in answer to her words, a noise, not loud but sharp, like to that she had made when she tapped the hour-glass, brought Krumm upstanding. Judith and Metje turned with one accord toward the window whence the sound came. The panes were small and none too clear, but close to them was a face peering in, and as they looked the man scratched again with his forefinger.

CHAPTER XX

IN WHICH METJE MAKES A CAPTIVE

“DO you know this fellow, *meisje*?” Metje asked her mistress in a low tone. “Shall I admit him?”

“I know him not,” Judith answered, “nor can I think of any honest errand to bring a man here at this hour—unless,” her face brightened at the thought, “he brings us a message.”

“To be sure!” cried Metje, ready at once to accept this suggestion. “We’ll let him in.”

“Stay,” said Judith, some caution lingering. “suppose there are more men than the one and we are overpowered?”

This suggestion was given serious consideration then Metje spoke as the man tapped once more impatiently.

“We must have words with the varlet,” she declared, “so do you open the door and slam it shut behind him. I’ll stand by, armed with the

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poker and with my other hand tight in Krumm's collar. Should more than one try to enter I'll loose Krumm and crack this man's skull with the poker, as 't were a burnt-out log."

This strategy was adopted but the young man who entered on Metje's opening the door a chink was alone and seemed a little shy about accepting the invitation to step within. He cast quick glances to the right and left and gasped a little, as does a fish out of water, ere he spoke.

"Is it here that Rob Marrow toileth?" he asked, his first question offering a puzzle for solution. Should they say "no," he would doubtless remove himself, and his message if he bore one would never be delivered. Should "yes" be their answer they ran the risk of betraying Robin.

"Have you word for me?" Judith inquired, trying to keep her eyes from Metje's face.

"I've no time to bandy words," the man said curtly. "I may be missed. Canst not answer a straight question?"

"Rob Marrow did work here in days past," Judith replied, and the man interrupted her eagerly.

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"I must have speech with him. At once, mistress. There's not a moment to lose."

"He's not here now," Judith assured him. "If you choose to leave your message, perchance I may be able to get it to him."

"Nay," returned the fellow, "I'll trust it to no woman, gentle or simple. I must see Rob for myself. An you cannot tell where he is, I must hunt for him." He twisted on his heel and went out as he had come. Metje followed him closely however, throwing back the word to Judith that she was going for more wood.

Without the door Judith heard the exchange of low words. She waited anxiously for a time, and at last, inaction becoming unbearable, she opened the door to look outside just at the moment when Metje came up the *stoep* with an armful of wood.

"I settled him," the woman cried, panting a little with excitement. "As I suspected when first I saw his evil face, he had come to arrest Robin."

"Single-handed?" asked Judith incredulously, "and for what, pray?"

"That I know not, and there may be other vile

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creatures awaiting his call; but he 'll not trouble us for the present. I have him safe." Metje wagged her head, well pleased with the success of her efforts.

"You have him safe! You?" Judith cried. "Metje what have you done with him?"

"Listen and I will tell you." The woman spoke complacently. It was evident that she was thoroughly satisfied with herself. "When we got outside I said, 'I know your news. Robin hath been informed on.' And he said, 'Think not to hide that he is here, for the Jonchere de Heem hath sent word of it to the authorities.' 'Then,' said I, 'would you like to see Robin?' and he muttered, 'That I would, for 't is my job to find him.' Which being plain enough to my understanding, I showed him the door of the milk-room and said, 'Blame me not if he is peevish at being waked untimely.' Whereupon the man put his hand to the latch and walked in—and I shut and locked the door behind him. We have him safe till we be minded to let him go."

Judith's interest in Metje's exploit was for the moment overshadowed by her astonishment at one item of the news.

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"Who, said you, informed on Robin?" she asked, a tone of incredulity in her voice.

"Truly," said Metje, sitting down on a joint-stool before the fire and fanning herself with her apron, "'t is I should be surprised, not you, for I liked the lad; but now I give in. You were in the right of it. He's a villain; that's plain. For all we know it may be he who hath seized away your tulips. Come to think on it, it was a rare tale he told—that he descended the stair barefoot not to wake the ladies. Eh, then he might have well-founded reasons for his thoughtfulness." Her stream of words flowed on while Judith, confounded by such news, tried hard to rearrange her ideas to fit the new circumstances.

"Nay then, Metje, I cannot make head nor tale of it," she cried at last. "What reason could Master Carolus have for doing Robin an ill turn?"

"If 't were the tulip he had in his mind," Metje said, "would he not wish our lustiest defender out of the way and would not Krumm be silent at his behest? Rob, indeed, was all he had to fear, and I doubt not he expected him to be taken much earlier in the evening."

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Again Metje was afloat on a sea of conjecture and again Judith was busy trying to piece the puzzle together in her mind. Robin had given up his old quarters since he knew runners were out after him and had occupied a room over their out-kitchen. She had heard him tell Carolus that the intruder was beaten off ere he had climbed the wall, yet what need had he to climb, who should have been abed long before the gates were locked? Could it be that Robin had backslid, as Metje said he ever threatened to do, and had himself taken the tulips? This idea the girl dismissed as soon as formulated. Robin was staunch, and he had told her he was not pirate but an honest sailor. He would n't steal from her. Indeed, had he wanted to, there was much more tempting spoil of silver and what-not within his grasp—things that she might not sell, under her grandfather's will, but which would bring a quick return to a robber. No, Robin could be dismissed from her mind, so far as the tulips were concerned. There remained Nan, De Heem, the stranger Carolus had grappled with, and Carolus himself. Nan, she believed, had come hoping to save the tulips from Lady Bellomont. De Heem

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the elder apparently had been accounted for by Krumm's attack upon him. The strange man, who Carolus had said had escaped empty-handed, might have been an emissary of her ladyship or he might have been an accomplice of Carolus's. In that case was it not reasonable to suppose that Carolus would have declared his confederate empty-handed to prevent pursuit? The more she twisted and turned the matter in her mind the more she added to the weight of evidence against Carolus.

"I say"—it was Metje speaking distinctly and with some acrimony,—"you were right. The young man is a rascal. I liked him well, but a blood-thirsty villain who would send an honest, hard-working body like Rob Marrow to be hung in chains at Execution Dock is scarce the print an untutored lass can read."

Judith remained silent for a moment; then she sprang to her feet excitedly.

"Look you, Metje," she cried. "While we waste breath in talk Robin is away at the mercy of this informer."

"That I have thought of, too," Metje declared, "but how can we mend it? We know not where

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to look for them and, as I figure it, for the present Robin is safe. Master Carolus needs his help. Moreover, being the informer, he will not wish Robin taken while in his company."

Judith sank back in her chair, glad to accept any reasoning that rid her of one of her worries, and as she did so there came a light tap upon the door and a voice saying softly:

"Metje, may I enter?"

All knew who was without, Krumm's heavy tail already wagging a welcome to a friend, and the door was opened without delay to admit Tom Lane.

"I met Robin and De Heem, he said. "What 's this about Nan?"

"What brings you here at such an hour, young sir," Metje spoke ponderously. "'Tis scarce the time for even an honest *queester*—"

"Metje," Judith said sharply, "this is no occasion for such nonsense! Master Lane is here about Nan. Day and night are one to friendly anxiety. The sand is out." She turned the glass. "I wonder where the dear child is?"

"Indeed I have come about her," Tom declared, setting his jaw, "but I have also a matter of my

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own to put straight. It seems my character is questioned by your cousin De Heem."

"No cousin is he, as I have said many times. But let that pass. How does he question you?"

"In truth I know not exactly," Tom said, "since he told me that the tulip was gone before my visit. Yet he refused to let me companion them."

"The tulip gone before your visit?" Judith knit her brow. "When were you here?"

"Not so long since," Tom acknowledged. "You may think it presuming on my part, but I grew suspicious of Lady Bellomont and the Here de Heem. They drew apart and seemed to plot together. There was no chance to ask your consent. In truth I had no word with you all afternoon, yet I determined to risk your displeasure to save you what you so greatly valued. I came to dig up the tulip and hide it."

Through Judith's mind flitted the thought, "It needs but Blandina now! What chance of existence had my poor tulip so plotted against in covetousness and kindness?"

But she held silent, and Tom went on, Metje

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having sympathetically drifted into the out-kitchen.

"I had not meant to speak to-night. I had thought to wait at least until the strawberry festival; but I never look at you that Carolus doth not fix me with a mocking gaze. I never plan to be alone with you that he doth not manage to send Blandina or Nan or Krumm to interrupt.

"I know I stand small chance against the courting of such a gallant, yet at least he shall not have you until I have spoken. I cannot vie with him, but, Judith, he doth not love you better than I do!"

Coming so unexpectedly in the dead of night after all she had gone through, Tom Lane's declaration of love stirred Judith deeply. This was not the way a Dutch suitor would have wooed her, but she was not sure that she liked it the less for that.

"Carolus de Heem hath not courted me," she said slowly. "He cares no more for me than I for him. Nay, do not laugh!" Peremptorily she stopped Tom's scornful mirth at her statement. "I tell you he hath said as much. Indeed

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"I think Carolus hath a fancy for Marya, so you see there is no need of haste. We are both over young for talk of love, and I have no other suitor."

"For Marya Jaspyn!" Tom voiced his utter unbelief. "Think you any one could look at that bit of rose and swan's-down while you are by? Do you not know that among these Dutch girls you are like your own dragon tulip, strange and arresting?"

Judith went back almost guiltily in her mind to Carolus' statement that she was French rather than Dutch; and Tom read something in her face, for he went on.

"I see I am not the first to tell you that. The Jonchere de Heem hath eyes and a tongue."

"The jonchere never bothers with either," Judith returned sharply.

"There's no maid in the world mislikes such flattery," Tom replied. "Well you know that although he may be talking to Marya, to Nan, or to my Lady Bellomont, his eyes are ever on you and no one else."

"Well I know no such thing," Judith declared. "I like him not, but I must acquit him of staring

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me out of countenance. He hath ever been polite enough, so far as that goes."

"Polite! Polite! I have not said he is not polite. Rather do I fear him for his subtlety. He is so polished a man of the world, so ready with all the small courtesies that maids love, so quick to set your chair, to hand your cup, to place a screen against the sun, that I feel myself a provincial bumpkin by his side. I know not if I think of such small attentions before he does them. At least I am always behindhand when it comes to action."

"You point out much to admire in him that I have never noted," Judith said, a trifle dryly, but she could not deny the facts when they had been brought to her attention. "However, admirable as he is, I have the bad taste to like him not. Yet I can promise myself to no one else, for I may be forced to wed him an the tulips are not found. You see it is a case of money."

"Oh, you think too much of money. You can't be forced to wed against your will," Tom said a trifle angrily. "I see what it is. You like to fancy yourself a figure of romance—What's that?"

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Something had fallen against the door with a crash that would have burst it in had it not been barred.

CHAPTER XXI

IN WHICH A GENTLEMAN IS DOUBTED

METJE rushed in from the other room; Krumm was on his feet, bristling but uttering no sound; and Tom and Judith looked at each other aghast. Then from without there came a deep groan.

"'T is Robin," said Metje. "Step back, you. He's sore hurt by the sound of it." Without more ado she brushed them aside, threw the door open, and the figure of Carolus de Heem, already collapsed against it on his knees, fell forward into the room.

"Oh, *wae, wae!*" Metje sobbed. "Robin must be dead! He must be dead!"

"No such thing," declared Judith sternly. "See you not what has happened? This fellow hath led Robin into an ambush, but he has served the informer out ere he was taken. Help me to turn him over," she said to Tom, as she knelt

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by Carolus's side. "And you, Metje, bring some spirits. We must get it all out of him ere he hath recovered the wit to lie."

Tom, utterly at a loss for an explanation of her words, still sprang to assist her, and together they moved the inert figure, then pressed a little liquor to his lips. It ran down over his chin, and Judith looked at Tom, horror dawning in her eyes.

"I think 't is death," she whispered, with a catch in her voice.

"Nay, then," said Metje, "give me the spirits. I'll wring the truth from him ere he passeth."

She too knelt on the floor and, lifting Carolus's head, managed at last to force a few drops of spirit down his throat. He swallowed it, but there was no immediate effect, and she tried again. This time his eyes opened and he seized the glass and took a great gulp of the liquor.

"'T is what I needed," he said simply. "Help me up. We'll see if I can stand."

On his feet he looked about him; an anxiety dawned in his eyes.

"Hath Robin not reached here yet? God send he's safe. He had been informed on." He told

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them angrily, his voice gaining a little in strength. "The news met us on the Strand. Warning had been sent him here, a friend said. I wanted him to take to the water at once, but, because of Nan, he refused to seize the chance; so together we pursued our inquiries, to learn that no one with a child, or a bundle big enough to conceal a child had entered the fort or the Governor's mansion this night." He took another gulp of the liquor. "We had made so sure to find her within the fort that this daunted us. At first we know not where to begin our search anew. Then I bethought me of the distant shores of Nassau Iseland, Staten Iseland, and the Jersey provinces, and suggested that we try for news along the water front."

"But what of Robin, man?" asked Metje. "What happened him, and he so big and strong?"

"'T was down by the Halles," Carolus said. "We saw a crowd of men coming against us. Some were soldiers, some roughs, and they shouted back and forth of the ten guineas on a pirate's head. Robin was for staying and fighting them. I begged him to run for it, pointing out that they had naught against me, who am a stranger here. Finally I persuaded him, and to-

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gether we dodged in and out of the stalls. Then I told him we must separate, it being twice as hard to follow two as one. He agreed and ran up an alleyway, such being our plan, you understand. But I, fearing that they might overtake him, and having a pretty conceit of my own skill with a sword, slammed shut a great door in the wall of a warehouse yard and stood in front of it, to lead them to think I covered his retreat. I ran little risk from attack in front, being in the embrasure with my back against the door, and soon I was able to convince them there was no price on *my* head, so I came here, hoping to find him before me."

"Think you we believe such a trumped-up tale?" Judith burst out scornfully. "How got you in such a state?" 'T is plain Robin gave you a drubbing. Think you we do not know that you were the informer and that he turned on you when you led him into ambush? We have the man you sent against him safe enough, and he, in his turn, turned informer." She stood defiant, looking Carolus up and down; and he faced her, as ever with his little mocking smile curling his lips.

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"Now would we were cousins," he said pleasantly, "for, better than any but one other, do I love a good hater."

As he spoke his voice grew weaker and he reeled on his feet.

Tom Lane passed an arm about him and turned on Judith with some heat.

"Call reason to your aid," he cried. "This man is wounded, but not by Robin."

"Wounded!" Judith repeated almost stupidly. "He is not wounded."

"Is he not?" Tom held out a hand smeared with red. "And is there any in this world who thinks that Robin Marrow would stab a man in the back?"

"'T is but a scratch," Carolus muttered. "Some one opened the door and stuck a knife through a joint in my harness. I thought the watch had staunched it, but it is bleeding still. 'T is that that—annoys me."

In a moment the scene was changed. Metje hurried for linen, Carolus was pressed into a chair, Tom helped him off with his accoutrements, his shirt was slit to his shoulder, and soon, under Metje's skilled fingers, the lips of the wound

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were brought together and the bleeding stayed. At the end Carolus declared himself a whole man again and even begged for a little food. But through it all Judith held herself aloof. If she had wronged him she meant to be sure she had ere she tried to make amends.

"Now what's this talk of your holding in custody one who came to warn Robin?" Carolus asked, sitting at the kitchen table while Metje cut him slices from the powdered mutton ham they had dined off of.

"That is not what we said," Judith contradicted him coldly. "We said we had captured one who had come to seize Robin."

"I am corrected," Carolus bowed, "but let's have the man out. My sword-arm is still my own, and Lane and I can assuredly hold him in check while we question him. I'm inclined to think you'll find you misinterpreted his message."

"Nor do I doubt it," Judith agreed, her lip curling, "with you here. We can scarce expect him to accuse you to your face."

"If I may say it without offense, I greatly admire your consistency, mademoiselle!" Carolus murmured. "Here, Lane, take my sword.

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I will go into the other room, and do you see that you come to the truth of this matter. Leave it not to mademoiselle to supply the poor wretch with his answers ere he speaks them. All's fair in love and war," he ended, meeting Judith's indignant eyes with a flash of his own.

"Now do you see how he hates me?" she whispered to Tom.

"Aye, I see," Tom answered, and with Metje and Krumm he went to the milk-room to fetch out the captive.

"Is it you at last, Rob?" the prisoner cried impatiently, at the first glint of light from the lanthorn. "I'm stiff as a board and I've over-set more than one bowl of cream, I'm thinking, which serves that mad woman out for the trick she played on me." He stumbled toward the door as he spoke, to draw back at the glint of cold steel.

"What's wrong wi' ye, master?" he asked Tom peevishly. "I come to do a friend a good turn and am poorly repaid for it."

"Come to the fire and tell your tale," Tom suggested; and nothing loth, for he was chilled to the bone, the young man entered the house, stum-

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bling at the threshold and blinking at the brighter light.

"There's no tale to tell," he grumbled. "I and one other were shipmates with Rob Marrow. We stand together still for love of each other and of our old command. Ben Quince warned Rob there were those who were set on to take him, but he thought to trick them and did for a time. Late to-night there came word that the old Jonchere de Heem had recognized in one Simon Gobbet, pretending to be a laborer about this place, a vile pirate."

"The Jonchere de Heem—he is not old," Judith interrupted. "He is a young man."

"I know not the Dutch of it," Robin's shipmate returned impatiently. "De Heem this man is called and an old rascal he is, take my word for it. I saw him to-night, and I've seen him before."

"Eh, well," said Metje, "I'm glad 't was not Master Carolus. I always loved the lad. On with your story."

"I've naught more to tell," he replied a trifle sullenly. "'T was my turn to warn Rob should danger come, so I ran here straightway. You know best why I was met as I was."

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Here Carolus reëntered the room.

"I take it the prisoner is dismissed without a stain on his character," he said, not glancing in Judith's direction, but pouring out a glass of *schnapps* for the captive. "Now may I have a word or two with this man? Your name?" he went on, without waiting for the permission he asked.

"I 'm Will Anderson, sir." The man pulled his forelock as to a superior, and sipped the liquor gratefully.

"You know your way about the water front, I am sure," Carolus continued. "'T is there you will find Robin. You must see him and warn him that he will be worse than useless an he is imprisoned."

"But Robin is no pirate!" Judith broke out, thinking that the time for such play had gone by. "How dare the Here de Heem swear away a man's life to deprive me of a stout defender?"

Robin's status as a hardy buccaneer was so firmly fixed in the minds of most of those present that her outburst went for naught.

"It is not safe for him to return here because of the Here de Heem. I shall at once set about

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having the charge against him dismissed. I can manage that, I think. Meantime he must take to cover, sending me word through you of his well-being. I offer you no pay for your good offices for two reasons. My pockets are empty and I would not insult your loyalty to your mate." Carolus held out his hand with a smile and Anderson wrung it and took his departure.

"But what of Nan?" Judith asked, when the man was gone.

"Her father must be summoned at once," Carolus returned. "It is my belief that the child recognized some one at the work of lifting the tulip and was carried off to prevent her telling. How I know not. Her father, I learned to-night, had intimate relations with many outlaws in Governor Fletcher's day. There may be reasons for her detention that we cannot guess. At least we have been able to come by no trace of her."

"Should we not inform the authorities? Start a hue and cry?"

"I dare not," Carolus replied. "Close pressed, her captors might—" He left his sentence unfinished, and Judith shuddered.

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"Now I would suggest that you—both," he studiously avoided meeting Judith's eyes, "go upstairs and try to sleep. Even an hour's rest will refresh you for another day."

"And you?" Judith faltered.

"There's the *slaapbanc*. One of them can lie there," Metje suggested, for, like all Dutch houses, this had its closet-bed in the kitchen. "The other can roll up in a blanket in front of the fire; with a pillow for his head he can make shift for once."

"We'll do very well," Tom said cheerfully. "Get you gone to bed. There's little enough night left."

After supplying them with bedding and blankets the two females blew out the lights and went upstairs.

"You're wounded. You'll take the bed," Tom suggested, and Carolus, not wishing to make him uncomfortable, thanked him and threw himself down.

"Where think you Robin is?" Tom asked when they were both settled.

"I believe after we found that Nan was not within the fort Robin was glad to be rid of me,"

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Carolus replied. "There are haunts of sailors and longshoremen where I could not pass unobserved but he would be at home. I hope he may yet send news. I'm always hopeful," he added, with a half-sigh, half-laugh at something in his own character that was plain to his mind's eye.

"De Heem," Tom suddenly began, hesitatingly, "now that we are in some sort allies in this matter, I'm wondering if I took an unfair advantage to-night."

"Eh," said Carolus, lifting himself on his elbow. "You would not do that, I am sure."

"I was angered because you would not have me with you," Tom explained, "so I came here to Judith and asked her to marry me."

"Indeed," returned Carolus gravely, and almost Tom could fancy he saw his eyebrows arch, "but I could scarce expect you to ask me to be present at such a declaration."

"No," Tom agreed, "yet I need not have told her you were in love with her."

"That would seem superfluous," Carolus admitted, "but I'm curious to know how the lady took the information."

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"She seemed scarce to take it seriously," Tom acknowledged.

"Then there 's no harm done and we can sleep," Carolus suggested, dropping back on his pillow and ejaculating, "Ouch!" as he did so.

"She did not reject me, I would have you understand," Tom said, bristling a little, "but she told me that she might be forced to marry you."

"Poor me!" Carolus exclaimed, "to be fated to wed an unwilling lady!"

"Then you would marry her, and she reluctant?" Tom questioned, his voice betraying his indignation.

"'T would be a sad quandary," Carolus returned, "for you must acknowledge that a man of spirit could scarce reject a lady. No, I see but one way out. You must save me from the horns of such a dilemma."

"I?" Tom's tone was startled. "How can I do that?"

"There are several ways," Carolus returned, and his companion cursed the dark that made it impossible to see his face and read his real meaning there. "I understand they marry one quickly at Sir Harry Moody's at Gravesend; but per-

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chance the easiest and surest way would be for you to find the tulip."

"Find the tulip," Tom grasped, "but, man, how can I think of little things like that and Nan gone?"

Something like a faint chuckle sounded from the *slaapbanc*, but the conversation stopped there; for the door, which had never been bolted after Will Anderson's departure, was thrown violently open. A cloaked figure showed for a moment against the dull mist as a man entered, and then the door was as violently shut behind him, Krumm's growls half drowning the sounds of his heavy breathing.

CHAPTER XXII

IN WHICH JAN BLOEMERS DROPS IN

HEARING Krumm's growl, the new-comer backed against the door, but his eyes, accustomed to the dark, at once made out the figure of Tom Lane extended before the fire.

"Carolus," he said sharply, "call off that brute if you would not have him killed. I warn you I go armed."

Tom, recognizing Here de Heem's voice, threw his arms around Krumm's neck but left Carolus to answer this remark.

"The dog will not harm you," young De Heem said, "but I knew not that you were out. Certainly you locked the door in my face some hours gone."

"Important business called me abroad again," De Heem returned, shaking the moisture from his hat. "Who was it bolted the door of the *voorhuis*?"

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"I," Carolus replied. "'T is customary to bolt it, is it not? I thought it a wise precaution—the more so in that I failed to find the key."

"The door was safe locked and you knew it," fumed De Heem. "Have a care, sir. Some day you will try me too far."

"Is that Robin?" Judith's voice spoke from the *voorhuis*. "May we come in? We heard the door slam?"

"Come by all means," Carolus replied cheerily. "But it is not Robin," he added, as Metje and Judith entered and lighted the candles.

At sight of De Heem Judith's figure stiffened and she fronted him gravely.

"Sir," she said, "I wait to hear your excuse for your treachery to one in my employ. How dare you, eating my bread, lodge information against one of my servants?"

If the girl was angry De Heem was angrier.

"Mistress to you!" he grunted. "In the first place, I do not acknowledge that I eat your bread. In the second place, when a pirate is at large with a price on his head, an innocent girl should be thankful to be protected from him, even if

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't was too late to save her valued (you note I do not say valuable) tulip."

"You do not deny that you informed on him?"

"I rarely waste time," De Heem interrupted, "nor, let me add, do I intend to waste much more here. I purpose returning to the Nederlandts in the next vessel sailing from this port. In view of the fact of your knowledge that my affairs must suffer in my absence, the governor has favorably considered my plea that you be forced to an instant settlement."

Judith stood speechless before this announcement, and De Heem left the kitchen without troubling to look for the effect of his words.

"Check," said Carolus from the *slaapbank*, "but not mate yet, mademoiselle. Before you came in Master Lane and I were discussing the necessity of recovering the tulip. I told him it was his duty, but he seemed to think that to find Nan was much more important."

"And he was right," Judith returned, the fire in her glance quenched. "Nan's life may be at stake. The tulip means only—my—happiness."

"I would we knew where Robin is," Metje said

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miserably, looking out into a sodden world where dawn was beginning to break. "Who are you, lad?" she cried of a sudden, throwing open the door and pouncing upon a boy, who made a quick attempt to twist out of her grasp.

"I've done naught to be hit for," the urchin whined. "Why be ye pulling me about? I'll tell my father if you beat me, and me doing naught but what I'm paid to do."

Metje had drawn him within the portal and he now stood fumbling his hat and looking cunningly from one to another of those whose faces showed white and drawn in the strange light where candles still were brighter than day.

"What is it you are paid to do?" Carolus asked. "Have you a message? Hand it over."

"Nay, 't was not you who was to have it but the Juffer Van Taarl," the boy said. "I am to place it in her hands and hers alone."

"Why, it is Jan Bloemers," Judith cried, coming forward eagerly. "Give me the letter." For on her coming he had pulled a paper from the lining of his hat.

At the sight of it her face brightened and half her cares seemed to have slipped from her shoul-

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ders, for it bore Salvador Dacosta's unmistakable seal.

He had not forgotten her then. The mysterious little man had meant it when he had said he would stand her friend. A certain sentiment made her preserve the seal that meant so much to her, and again she opened the letter carefully. It read:

Have you a picture of your tulip? Give it to bearer and I may be able to help you. YOUR FRIEND.

All in the room watched her with unconcealed interest, feeling that a letter received at such a time must be important.

"It is not from Robin," she told them, "but the news hath hope in it about the tulip. Wait here," she addressed Jan. "I will be back at once."

She left the room to return with the picture of the flower in her hand.

"Find me wrappings," she told Metje. "This must be done up with care against the foul weather."

"Mademoiselle," Carolus began of a sudden, "try for a moment to forget your dislike of me. Try to see that I can have no selfish motives in

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what I am about to say. Are you sure it is wise to let that picture go out of your own hands?"

"I am sure it will be safer out of this house," Judith said coldly.

"That may be true," Carolus returned, unmistakably hurt, "but place it personally in the hands of one you can trust. Do not risk it with this little rowdy. He is not a sufficiently responsible messenger. Remember that drawing is all the means you have to identify your tulip."

"What you say is true," Judith spoke more graciously, "but this letter is from one in whom I have every confidence."

"You know the writing?" Carolus asked.

"No," Judith hesitated, "I cannot say I do."

"Then, an you are not sure of the writer, you must not risk the picture."

Metje arrived with the wrappings but that "must not" was too vehement. Judith laid the picture on the table and began to do it up with care.

"I am sure," she said, "this is his seal. There are not two like to it in New Yorke."

She had laid the letter also on the table

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whence Tom Lane now picked it up and examined it curiously.

"Saw you ever the like of that, De Heem?" he asked, carrying it over to the *slaapbank* where Carolus reclined.

Carolus took it from his hands and examined it carefully.

"'Tis Hebrew, I think," he said, "and, as you justly say, there are scarce two such in this city."

Judith had made an end of swathing the picture about with wrappings and was now tying it stoutly with tape. One end was too long, and she motioned Tom to cut it with his hanger just as Carolus stiffly heaved himself out of bed and walked across the room to the window.

"You will be careful of that package, Jan," Judith said anxiously, as she gave it into his hands. "Do not stop to fight on the way."

"That I won't, *meisje*," Jan promised, making for the door in haste to escape, where Carolus was just a second too quick for him, kicking it to in his face ere he could reach it.

"Watch him, Lane, that he doth not harm the

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drawing," he cried. Then he turned to Judith. "I beg you, in the name of that happiness which you said was at stake, not to act hastily in this matter."

"Is this my house or is it not?" Judith stamped her foot. "Am I to be constrained, bidden to do this or not to do that, by every stranger who lodges beneath my roof? Let the boy go! It is my wish that he do this errand as quickly as may be and rid me of this domination."

Tom stood aside ready to let Bloemers pass, while the boy grinned at Carolus impudently and made a step toward the door; but Carolus set himself in front of it.

"Nay, then, he shall not go!" he cried as hotly as Judith herself. "You cannot be so self-willed as that. Why ruin yourself to spite me? Unless 't is your wish to bring about our marriage, you will examine well this seal." He held it out toward her.

"I have done so," Judith declared, as icy as she had been hot before, refusing to take it from his hand.

"Aye," Carolus muttered bitterly, "as you examine everything—on one side only."

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"Sir," said Judith, "as I see it, there is but one side to all questions—the right side."

"Have it your own way," Carolus returned, "I am not minded to bandy words with you. This is not a case of double meanings but of facts. Here is this seal. Without looking at it save with one careless glance, you say it is a right and proper seal, and stake your all upon it."

"And so I do!" Judith exclaimed heatedly.

"And are a fool for your pains," Carolus told her rudely, caring nothing what he said to her so that he roused her from her self-satisfaction. "I say it is no seal at all, and stand ready to prove it. Yet because you like me not, though whether it is the color of my hair or the shape of my nose that so enrages you I know not, your pride and obstinacy move you to refuse this proof for no better reason, forsooth, than because 't is I who proffer it." He turned from her and held out the letter to Metje. "Here, Metje," he said, "let 's hope you have brains in your head to comprehend what your mistress refuseth to look at. If you turn that over you will see, where the letter hath been torn open, a scrap of blue paper. This seal, when it was an honest seal, was

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dropped on paper of that hue. On this letter, which is white, it has been pasted solely to mislead the unwary."

There was a scuffle as Jan Bloemers dashed for the door. Foiled there, Metje was only in time to seize him when he tried to reach the fireplace and throw the parcel therein. At last, Tom Lane grasping both his wrists, the woman took the drawing from him and handed it silently to Judith, who received it as silently.

Jan Bloemers at once created another diversion by making a new dash for liberty, and, no one having any reason for keeping him, he was allowed to escape, although Krumm would have been delighted to receive orders to delay him.

It was full daylight by now and Judith watched the boy run down the path, his wooden shoes clattering; then she turned with a sigh, preparing to make some sort of an apology to Carolus, but he too had gone. Only Tom and Metje were there and, as she looked, Metje snuffed out the candles.

Another day was begun.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN WHICH A MARRIAGE IS ARRANGED

WITH daylight Tom Lane elected to go home, and shortly thereafter came Kate to report no news in Waal Straat. It was determined that she should at once despatch messengers after Mistress Homan and her husband, and, opening the kitchen door to set off on this errand, she was arrested on the steps by the sound of a voice.

"But you must find it, Krumm," were the words spoken in earnest tones. "I cannot live with you always. I must get me home to breakfast ere I am missed. And, on one foot, I cannot hop all the way to the Waal Straat."

No more was needed. With a piercing shriek Nurse Kate rounded the corner to Krumm's kennel and descended upon Nan, no longer loving and anxious but filled with righteous wrath for all she had suffered through her anxiety.

"Never in the history of this province was

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there such a wicked child," she cried heatedly. "You should be soundly slapped—"

Nan lightly dodged her onslaught and fled to Judith, looking out from the shelter of her arms impishly, while Krumm ranged himself in front of them, holding Kate off with a show of glistening teeth.

"Nay, I am not wicked," Nan declared, "for I did not steal Judith's tulips though I tried to."

"But you are wicked to set your dog on your loving nurse," sobbed Kate, bursting into tears at the thought, her short-lived anger gone; whereat Nan cast off Judith's arm to run to her and be smothered with kisses.

"Though little you care for my love or worryment," Nurse Kate wept.

"But I do, indeed I do," Nan vowed. "I never thought you would know that I was gone. You sleep so soundly that many a night the maids and I play hide and seek and such gay games through the whole house without your blinking an eye."

"The maids, say you?" Kate bristled, glad to find some one to vent her anger on. "And, pray, who lets them out, once I have closed the door on them?"

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But this question Nan was not ready to answer, seeing that the blame was hers. Instead she turned to Judith mysteriously.

"Didst ever see one walking in sleep?" she asked. "And snoring the while?"

"Now that I do not do," Kate said. "I do not snore, I vow. Full many a night I've lain awake to make sure."

"Here is your shoe, Nan; be off home with you," Metje suggested, but Judith stopped the child.

"Why did you not go back when you found the tulips gone?" she asked. "For I suppose they were gone ere you got here?"

"A man frightened me," Nan explained. "In the dark he was upon me ere I saw him, and I ran like a rabbit and scrambled into Krumm's house for safety. Once there, I was minded to stay, for there were a mort of people about the place and I was warm and cozy."

That evidently was all she had to tell, and Judith let her go after she had said that the man, she was sure, was a stranger to her, else had she not feared him.

There still remained the affair of the tulip to

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puzzle Judith, and she was glad when Moeye Beletje made several excursions down the stairs, with the heels of her slippers clapping on each step, to go back laden with trays of food for her family, so that Metje and she were left to breakfast alone.

The two then did their familiar work about the house nervously, their ears ever on the strain for an arrival heralding news of some sort, though where it was to come from they knew not.

At last Judith went into the office and wrote a note to Salvador Dacosta begging him to appoint a place where she might see him. This she addressed to David Cohen at the City Tavern, as he had instructed her to do, and despatched it by the boy who carried water from the Tea-water Pump.

She had no idea how the Jew could help her, but she had no one else to turn to, for she knew full well that, to most of the Dutchmen in New Yorke the plan of a marriage with Carolus would seem as easy and sensible a solution of her difficulty as it had to her own father; and on one point she was more and more determined. She

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would not be forced into a marriage with any one who held her in the contempt Carolus did.

While she was turning over in her mind the thought of what to do next he came slowly down.

"I must speak to you in private," he said, looking up the stairs apprehensively.

Without a word Judith led the way to the office.

"The person who took Nan may also have taken the tulip," he began, "or Nan, having the tulip, may have been seized with it in her possession. That tulip must be found. I want no unwilling bride."

"Would it not be easy enough for you to refuse to marry me?" Judith suggested eagerly. "I would pay each year until all was done."

"No," said Carolus, "that I may not do. I was committed to the marriage before ever I came here and saw you. It is the price I pay for—it matters not for what. Sufficeth that it is a price agreed on; and there is more than the money at stake; I am sure of that. Not putting too fine a point on it, Claes de Heem's son might make a richer marriage in the Old World, an his

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father willed it; so you see he hath another reason, and it is scarce love for either of us, mademoiselle."

"Why should your father dislike you?"

Carolus shrugged his shoulders.

"I know not, nor care. My mother died before I can remember. The first kindness I ever knew came from your aunt."

"So that is why you are so patient with her?"

"Should a lonely lad not be patient with the only soul who loves him?" Carolus returned almost irritably.

"I should have told you sooner," Judith said. "Nan is back. In truth she was never taken." In a few words she related the child's story, over which Carolus shook his head.

"There's naught to tell us if this was still another marauder or if it was the man I tussled with," he said. "Nor does it greatly matter. I'm going out. I shall make the rounds of the taverns. A chance word might put me on the track. So far I am like a man trying to climb a hill of shifting sands. Each step forward sends me sliding to where I was before, and accomplishes naught but to raise a cloud of dust

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to hide what I seek. Still I am right glad Nan is safe." He swung out of the door as he spoke and was gone.

The day wore on. The Here de Heem also left the house early and did not come back. Moeye Beletje, without her husband to keep her in subjection, was free to talk of her favorite, and for once Judith listened leniently. She was conscious of many wrongs that she had done Carolus in her thoughts, and here was her chance to do a kindness which he would be grateful for.

"He is so good, so true, so handsome," Moeye Beletje ran on. "He was such a favorite at court. He stood so high in the estimation of the king."

"At court?" said Judith astounded. "Nay, Moeye Beletje, I know not what you are speaking of. Who was the king?"

"William of Orange, to be sure," her aunt said. "Indeed it was his attendance on the king that has tied us in this knot, or partly."

"Tell me about it," Judith begged, at last really interested.

"The De Heems, you know, are of prominence in Holland," her aunt began importantly. "Claes

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hath great establishments. He tells me now that 't was I who was ambitious for Carolus. I thought he wished him to stand high in the king's favor, even as I did, else why did he have him trained and educated as a soldier? To which I was opposed, it being a bloody and dangerous calling. At all events the boy caught the king's eye, and he carried him back and forth to England in his suite. His future seemed assured. Now Claes, for all he was so rich, was ever cautious with money; and, while he wished his son to ruffle it with the highest, he would have sent him lean supplies. Carolus made no complaint, but I, being a woman, guessed that expenses at court must be heavy. Therefore I scrimped here and pinched there, and so, saving a plenty for him, sent it to him in his father's name, bidding him remember that he had no liking for thanks; for I did not wish the lad to think that I lacked for aught on his account.

"Carolus was home on a visit when his father descended upon me, calling me thief, a trickster—I know not what. The boy came in upon us in the midst of this horrible quarrel, the very reason for which I could not guess. He interposed to

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protect me, and then it came out that Claes considered I had robbed him in those years when I had sent supplies to our son. (Of course I know that he is not my son, Judith, but I love him as though he were so in truth.)”

“Yes, yes!” said Judith impatiently. “Go on.”

“’T was then Carolus, learning all, resigned from the king’s service and wished to be set to work to pay this money back; but his father insisted that it was I, not Carolus, who was responsible and that he meant to hold me so. He scoffed at the idea of Carolus being of use in his business, refusing to be burdened with him there; but one day, after he had been more than usually hard on me, Carolus jumped from his chair and said—I can see him yet, Judith, he was so brave and handsome—‘I’d sell my soul to the devil,’ he said—those were his very words,—‘if I could buy my mother peace from your persecution.’

“‘Fine words,’ sneered Claes. (He hath a sneering way with him sometimes, Judith. You may have noticed it.) ‘We’ll see how much they’re worth. Listen, thou!’ He meant Carolus. ‘I have put too much to be wholesome in

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one venture. Wilt go to New Yorke and marry the girl I pick out for thee, if I let bygones be bygones with thy mother?’

“ ‘Aye, and you settle a decent jointure on her as well; that I will,’ Carolus replied.

“And when I heard that you were the maid, Judith, I had high hopes that you and he might grow fond of each other. You do like him better than you did, Judith? I marked you right friendly with him in the office.”

“Yes,” said Judith in a strangled voice. “I like him—better than I did. Have you finished your tea, Moeye Beletje? I must run and see how Metje’s work comes on.”

When she reached the kitchen it was to find Metje holidaying.

Robin was there. How he had come or when Judith had no idea, but he was standing awkwardly before Metje, saying, “There, there, lass, there ’s naught to cry for. Why that tear was as big as a double guinea, and I ’ve none backslided. I tell thee, none at all.”

Judith hated to break in upon them, but it was still broad daylight and De Heem might return.

“Robin!” she exclaimed. “I am right glad

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you are safe. But the Here de Heem has informed against you and he may be here himself at any minute."

"Aye," said Robin complacently. "The swine! I am come to squash him like a *kackerlack*. What right has the like of him to go informing on an honest man like me?"

"But, Robin," Judith spoke anxiously, "for all that 's true, there 's no ten pounds' reward set on his head like there is now on yours."

"Then there ought to be," Robin averred stoutly. "I 'm none backsliding, girl. I mean to settle down to grow onions and carrot-roots for the rest of my days." This was by way of answer to Metje's hand on his arm. "But first there 's duty to be done. None shall throw dirt at me, let alone one who is tarred with the same stick."

"That 's wild talk, Robin," Judith said. "I think he 's a villain, but when all is said the Here de Heem is no buccaneer."

"That he is, and a marooner too, and I can prove it. I and two other witnesses. "

"Then tell your tale and let me judge it," Judith suggested, but Robin set his jaw obstinately.

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“Never in my life did I take away a man’s good name behind his back, nor will I now,” he averred stoutly. “I shall wait for him and have it out, man to man, when he cometh home.”

From this stand nothing would move him and the best they could do was to persuade him, by means of floods of Metje’s tears, that he must submit to be concealed in the office until such time as De Heem returned.

Tom Lane was the next arrival, in his youthful egotism filling the air with his own story. He was full of apologies for not coming sooner, but his father had kept him urgently employed, and, short of telling the whole truth, it had been impossible for him to get away.

“Have you heard that the Governor and his lady are soon to leave us for Boston?” he asked excitedly. “Think you this departure hath aught to do with the tulip?”

Judith considered the matter; then shook her head.

“The Governor is an honorable man,” she said, “but this I know. Her ladyship will be happy indeed to leave us and our Dutchness.”

“I have been half wild with anxiety about

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Nan," Tom now confided to the girl. "No wonder I have made mistakes and had my work to do twice over. I should think this day would settle my father to send me back to my studies."

"That would suit your taste," Judith pointed out.

"It would have, once," Tom acknowledged, "but my plans have changed. I'm minded now to go to work in right earnest. I wish to be able to support my wife," he ended pompously.

"So!" Judith looked at him out of the corner of her eye, wondering inwardly the while why she was not able to take him seriously. "You're thinking of marrying then?"

"Full well you know I am," he retorted with meaning. "First we'll find Nan, then I'll have time to look about for the tulip, and, with that found, you'll have to—"

"But Nan is found," Judith said. "At least she never was lost—"

The return of Carolus at this moment put her in some manner out of countenance. He was pale and carried his shoulder stiffly, making Judith think of his wound, which she had never had the grace to inquire after.

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"Robin is here, Metje tells me," he whispered eagerly. "Now I'm right glad he met no hurt."

"But you did," Judith said with unwonted meekness. "How is your wound?"

"It does not impair my fighting qualities," Carolus replied, as if to imply that Judith could have no other interest in his injury.

"I'm off to Waal Straat to hear of Nan's doing at first hand," Tom cut in. It seemed to him that he was ever left trailing behind like the tail to a kite when Carolus was by.

"Wait but a moment," Carolus interposed. "I have a thought! That picture may not be safe here, but in the care of— Mademoiselle, I pray you to ask Lane to convey it to Here van Bursum."

Tom's face dropped ludicrously at this suggestion.

"To be sure 't is ever my first wish to serve Judith, but the rest of you have seen Nan while I have not," he said disconsolately. "Can you not act as messenger yourself, De Heem?"

Carolus started. "My shoulder—," he began.

"Good lack, it has n't hurt your legs, man!" Tom's tone was petulant. "The air will do you



"That way, too, it might be arranged"

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good. I'm off to see the little lady." Without more ado he whipped out by the back and was gone.

"His love of adventure is strong," Carolus said, looking at Judith half apologetically.

Judith smiled quizzically.

"And now about the picture?" she asked, to see what his answer would be. "Will you carry it?"

"No!" Carolus spoke positively. "While there is a doubt who hath the tulip, I consider myself even suspect; but this I think is safe enough in broad daylight. Do you carry it, and I will walk behind and guard you."

"Think you," Judith asked gravely, "that it would be less safe an you walked by my side?"

"Nay," Carolus returned, after an instant's study of her face, "that way too might it be arranged."

On their return from this walk, which they had taken at a slow pace because Carolus's weakness proved greater than he would confess, they entered the *voorhuis* to find a party assembled around the devastated tea-table.

"Here then are the bride and groom!" Here

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de Heem announced formally the instant they entered.

Taken aback, the two said nothing; and in that moment's space Mistress Homan ran forward and threw herself on Judith's neck.

"How can I be grateful enough to you for your interest in Nan," she sobbed hysterically. "Think of the home-coming I might have had! But you are wise to marry, my dear. Every woman needs a protector."

"I am not going to wed!" Judith declared loudly, putting her aside. "And if I were I would call upon no one unknown to me, but on the Dominie Selÿns, minister of our own Dutch church." She looked with considerable suspicion at the stranger in clerical garb, who stood rubbing his hands together and trying to appear as if there was nothing unusual in this opposition on the part of the bride.

"The Reverend Selÿns went a-visiting to Rensselaerswick some days ago. When he will return seems to be in doubt. Meanwhile you must see that, as your aunt and I sail for Amsterdam on the tide, we cannot leave you and Carolus behind to bill and coo at your pleasure."

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Carolus started forward with clenched fists. "This is infamous!" he said.

"Do not say anything you will regret," De Heem warned him. "You gave your word of honor."

"Aye, fool that I was; but I did n't think to find things as they are."

"None the less are you bound, as is Judith by her father's promise," De Heem reminded the girl. "I have allowed her ample time to take up his obligations, but she cannot."

"Did you steal the tulip to make that impossible?" Judith flashed at him.

"Now that is greater subtlety than I had supposed you endowed with, my young lady," De Heem said, grinning evilly. "Truth to tell, when I watched you slip out, destroy your tulips, which you as well as I knew to be worthless, and throw the fragments over the wall, I credited you with no more than a romantic taste in wishing your surrender to Carolus to seem forced."

"Now there you lie!" Carolus cried hotly.

"That is not filial, my son," the minister interposed. "Honor thy father—"

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“But how can it be true?” Tom Lane interrupted him, “for well you know that Judith is promised to me.”

CHAPTER XXIV

IN WHICH SALVADOR DACOSTA HAS THE LAST
WORD.

THROUGH the confusion of her thoughts Judith became aware of something of an uproar. De Heem was pounding the table and declaring Tom a presumptuous young fool. Carolus was pointing out to De Heem that he could not hold him to a bargain to marry a maiden already betrothed to another; for, among the Dutch, a betrothal was wellnigh as binding as a marriage.

But De Heem shouted them all down.

“’T is for her to say if she upholds this upstart’s claim. If so, her aunt and I will have them married out of hand and will find out what he has that will help pay our losses in the *Great Mogul*.”

But at the words *Great Mogul* Robin entered the room as if propelled by a catapult.

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"Ods-blood!" he sputtered. "What talk is this of losses in the *Great Mogul*? Metje was for having me hold my tongue before the gentry, though I was fair puzzled at sight of the model of the old ship; but this is too much. Missy, what have you to do with the *Great Mogul*? I pray you give me a straight answer, for my thick head is like to split with what is hard enough to understand already."

"Boatswain Rob Marrow," sneered De Heem, "and still at large! This man is an outlaw, and we can waste no time on him. By the order of her dead father, (and, take note, this maid not being of legal age should be bound by his word,) I command that this marriage go forward at once."

"My father was owner of the *Great Mogul*, Robin," Judith told him, ignoring De Heem. "She carried some cargo for the De Heems, and my father put into the venture so much of his fortune that he had not the money to pay back in full when the vessel was lost and enjoined me to this marriage unless, mark this well, all of you, I cleared his credit by other means. The tulip promised what I lacked, but it is gone."

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"No matter," Robin snorted. "No matter at all. One of my roaming fits on me, I found myself in the Lowlands, where the word was passed about that men were sought for a rich venture. This tempted me the more that they said there was no bloodshed nor aught illegal in it. So we sailed with certainty, Here de Heem being aboard directing the master, to intercept the *Great Mogul*, which he claimed was his and that he had learned of a plan to cast her away and later to salvage her cargo, thus robbing him without risk—a plan we were to forestall. It was a strange course we laid and the sailors chuckled to think of his disappointment, for we were quite out of the way of merchantships; but 't was we who were astonished, for we met the *Mogul* as by magic and, still under his orders, marooned certain of her officers and men and took her to a safe harbor. Here I had my first suspicions that all was not right, for he changed her rig, gave her new papers, and sailed her into the Scheldt to Antwerp in broad daylight accredited to Here de Heem as the *Patron Saint* of Venice, cargo carrier for his house."

"At last," cried Carolus. "At last I see why

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you were so eager for this marriage. You thought, an it chanced that any of the marooned men came back, were Judith my wife she would be constrained to keep your secret."

"'T is a fine picture. The faithful henchman sacrificing himself to save his mistress her fortune; for of course you realize that, in attempting to blacken me, this man hath blacked himself as well. Moreover, the word of an outlaw, quite unsupported as this is, can convince no one and is of no legal value against the word of a man of my repute. There is naught here, to my mind, to delay this ceremony."

"No outlaw am I," said Robin steadily. "'T was not till you changed the *Mogul's* name that ever we doubted your story, for witness to truth of which I have two men, Ben Quince and Will Anderson, both in government employ."

"There is, too, your humble servant." The little figure of Dacosta came into the room apologetically. Yet small as it was and shabby almost to raggedness, at its advent De Heem lost his confident bearing. It was as if a light within him had gone out. So far there had been nothing

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opposed to him that he had not thought to break down by sheer unscrupulous determination; but here was steel of a temper rarely met with, and he acknowledged his superior.

"I told you, Claes, that some time you would try me too far. This is that time. Moreover you lied to me. I do not permit that my servants lie to me. Since I do not deal in stolen goods, when I learned the *Patron Saint* was not the *Patron Saint*, I came to take a hand in your game. So I am here and so you have not won. Not one least little venture, Claes de Heem. I have your tulip safe, my child," he nodded in friendly-wise to Judith. "I was in Boston-town when your first message came, but I had left you in sure hands and you will not need to sell the flowers now unless you wish. They are indeed wonderful blooms. In all my collection I have nothing to rival them."

"I might have known," Judith murmured.

"That I would not desert you? Yes, you might have known, yet I do not blame you for your doubt."

"Who is this man?" Carolus asked in a strained

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voice, for, much as he disliked and distrusted De Heem, he was still his son and felt his honor shaken by his downfall.

"I am Dacosta, Salvador Dacosta," the Jew murmured. "A friend of yours, young man."

"No," said Carolus, "no. I cannot yet reason out where all this perfidy has landed us, yet I am sure that my father has possessions in Patria that will enable him to make up the Juffrouw Van Taarl's losses. If he will do this, I will call no man friend who is not a friend to him."

"I like your spirit, but when an old tree hath grown crooked all its years you cannot hope to straighten it. I know, because I tried. My young sister, very beautiful to me, was his first wife. He stole her from me with false words; and for seven days I sat on the stool of mourning in our synagogue, with ashes on my head and on my breast. I mourned her as dead, and yet she was not dead. I could not make my heart believe it, and so I rose and followed her. I thank the God of Israel that she died childless, leaving none to be shamed by him."

"Then did my father marry yet again?" asked Carolus.

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"No," said Dacosta; "you see, he is not your father."

"Then am I not his *moeder*," Vrouw de Heem began to sob.

"Yes, yes, you are. You always will be." Carolus patted her shoulder and gave her his hand to fondle; but his eyes sought Dacosta's with a dumb questioning that was painful to see.

"Before he stole her from me and lured her into a marriage—not for love of her sweet innocence, but because she was the rich Jew's joy—this little sister of mine had taken to her heart the child of two French Huguenots. They fled from persecution in France to meet death by plague near Antwerp. They trusted us with their child, Jews though we were; but, when my Miriam died, De Heem swore he loved you. The hand of a little child can sometimes soften a hard heart, and who was I to judge him? For a time *she* had loved him. She must have seen good in him. Then, too, it seemed right that a Christian child should be reared by Christians, so I left you to him, knowing full well that your own patrimony was amply sufficient for your needs. It wrung my heart, but I gave you up to him." Da-

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costa held out a trembling hand to Carolus, who grasped it. "Tell me I did well," he begged. "I have watched you lovingly from afar. It seemed to me my sister's foster-child did her honor."

"He is the best son, the handsomest, the bravest. Never has he given me a moment's pain," wept Vrouw de Heem, and Salvador Dacosta smiled.

"That is as I thought," he said simply. Then he turned to De Heem and issued cold commands. "To-morrow, at the City Tavern, you and your adopted son will meet me and we shall set straight your tangled affairs. There is enough for all who are not over-covetous. I will have the ship held till this matter is arranged. After which, naught will be gained by your further stay."

To Judith he said:

"Have no anxieties, my child. You are free. Free as the winds of heaven." He was shyly edging toward the door as he spoke, intent upon getting away now that his business was done; and indeed all those who were not of the household felt their position awkward and were ready to say good-by with as little ceremony as possible.

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It was Carolus who stopped the Jew on the threshold.

"But if I am not Carolus de Heem, who am I?" he demanded impetuously.

"You are Charles Rosny, of a cadet branch, but distantly connected with the elder house."

"'T is enough if I come of honorable people," Carolus said, raising his head proudly and filling his lungs with air.

There followed confused farewells, broken expressions of gratitude from Judith, happy tears as she parted from Nan and her mother at the gate; then, turning to return to the house, she found Tom Lane in her path.

"Come to the summer-house," he said. "I must have a word with you."

As an explanation between them seemed imperative, she walked by his side to the summer-house where she leaned on the rail, looking down on the place whence the tulip had been lifted.

"I have had so many friends, who thought I had so few," she murmured. "Nan, Robin, and Metje, for they have owned that they too tried to save the tulip; Salvador Dacosta and you, Tom."

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"I am more than a friend, who soon will be your husband," Tom averred stoutly.

Judith looked at him and, smiling, shook her head.

"No, Tom," she said gently. "Fine was it, and noble, the way you came to my defense, but in your heart of hearts you do not mean it. I am Dutch, so Dutch for all I am dark-colored, and you are English, Tom. Your family would not wish you to marry with a simple Dutch girl. Your pretty dashing sister would have little liking for my provincial ways and manners. I would not be happy nor would they. Dutch should marry Dutch; English, English."

Tom considered this for a moment.

"But how if I love you?" he asked. "Whether it is wrote in Dutch or English, there's the fact of it."

"No fact but fancy," Judith declared positively. "You know not what love is, Tom."

"And how of a sudden are you so wise?" the lad asked jealously. "For, mark you, if you'll none of me, 't is as bad for you to wed Carolus who's a Frenchman."

"And is that a match Carolus seemed inclined

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to?" Judith scoffed, making ready to go into the house.

"I 'd feel easier if you promised me not to wed him," Tom said, though to his surprise he found himself scarce so miserable as he had imagined a rejected suitor to be.

"'T is safe enough to promise I 'll not wed him against both our wills, for 't is plain there will not again be such a necessity," Judith returned lightly.

"And that 's no promise at all," Tom declared half angrily.

"It was the very circumstance you helped to save me from to-day," Judith reminded him. Then she held out her hand. "I must go in. They will wonder where I am. And poor Moeye Beletje will surely need comfort, after seeing her world in pieces before her eyes."

"Think you she will return to Europe with her husband?"

"I will let her know that she is welcome here. What she will elect to do will depend upon his will. I am quite sure he can make her think him a great man still an he desires her company."

With few more words they parted, the rejected

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suitor soon whistling gaily in the sunlight and thinking excitedly of the tale he would have to tell if honor ever loosed his tongue.

Judith gravely reëntered the *voorhuis*, intending to look for her aunt. Instead she found Carolus, very white and worn, collapsed in a chair.

She was at his side in a moment.

"Is there no one in all this house to have a care over you?" she asked half crossly. "Do they expect you to have strength after such a bleeding? Where is your mother?"

"She will not leave Here de Heem's side now. She thinks that, with the world turned against him, he hath need of her," Carolus said with a smile. "There's naught wrong with me, except that I have been stirred to my depths when not quite at my burliest."

"Also you've had no *stuk*—naught to eat since dinner, for they had all done their tea ere we came in, and I'll warrant Metje's head is too full of Robin to give a thought to you. Stay where you are. 'T will take but a moment to brew it." In response to Carolus's protest she called over her shoulder as she went to the kitchen, "indeed I need some cheer myself."

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Returning shortly with tea and pouring Carolus a cupful, which she laced liberally with rum, she seated herself beside him and prepared to enjoy her own refreshment.

"How are you feeling now?" she asked, eying him anxiously. "Robin and Metje are but phillandering in the garden. Would it not be well if I called him to help you to bed?"

"I beg of you," Carolus put out a protesting hand. "This fine tea that you brew has made a new man of me. Another cup of it and I'll be dancing the *coranto*."

Judith filled his cup and urged him to eat a little of the bread and dried fruit that she had brought; but, when they had done, she picked up the tea-board and carried it back to the kitchen, Carolus watching her the while with rather a sad droop to his mouth.

When she came back to him he met her with an attempt at cheerfulness.

"Let's go see the sunset from the summer-house," he suggested. "This will be my last night under your roof and I should like to remember that we parted in amity."

"I'll watch it with you gladly, although 't is

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my belief you are fit for naught but bed," Judith declared.

None the less she went outside with him and they seated themselves close to the rail of the summer-house. The spring days were long and there was no thought of sunset in the light. So, robbed of that subject of conversation, they sat silent until Judith bethought her of the seal.

"How came your father to use Dacosta's seal?"

"I asked him that," Carolus explained. "He was hunting for the picture and came across it by chance. It seems he did not know it for Dacosta's, but, finding it treasured, it occurred to him that it must be the seal of a friend and that there was likelihood that you would give consideration to a letter closed with it."

"And he was right! He is a subtle man." Her further words were stilled, for Carolus touched her gently with his finger.

"Are those your tulips come to life," he asked under his breath. Below them, darting among the flowers and in and out between the twigs of the shrubs, were half a score of little birds, the black, orange-red, and cream of their plumage making them seem indeed like flying flowers.

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"Oh!" exclaimed Judith breathlessly. "'T is the red-starts. I feared that I had missed them this year. Are they not wonderful? And so fearless that they will not leave us if we talk. Indeed you are right that they are like my tulips."

"Even as it is like you," Carolus said. "It is vivid and arresting, with something I never quite grasp as a part of its charm."

"Oh, that 's the Dutch in me. Being a Frenchman as I accused you of being long ago, 't is natural that you do not understand the Dutch," Judith said lightly.

"What will you do with the tulips. There will be no need to sell them now unless such is your wish," Carolus said, passing her remark by.

"That is what I've told myself," Judith responded. "It is hard to come to a realization of circumstances that have changed so quickly, but one I think I should like to keep here. The other I will ask Salvador Dacosta to accept, as a reminder of my gratitude."

"That would be gracious of you, for without him we should have failed," Carolus acknowledged, with a trace of bitterness. "I could not lay my finger on the weak point in De Heem's

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armor; and yet I told you he had some crafty reason for furthering our marriage. Now you are free of that and can marry Lane."

"'T is possible, no doubt," Judith agreed gravely. "But, on the other hand, why should I? For all he knows it not, 't is Nan Homan hath his heart. Nay, trouble not to deny it; that little maid, despite her tender years, has beauty and wit. Tom, albeit he counts himself grown, is still as much a child as she. In fact, I hold him the younger, for Nan hath her deeper feelings which Tom as yet lacks. I am no seer to prophesy the future, but visit us again in five years and see what you will see."

"Thank you, but when I go I shall not return. I've no desire to greet you as the Mevrouw Jaspyn either."

"Now that's that minx Marya. Indeed I am not promised to her brother, nor ever was nor ever will be. But that mindeth me. An you go to-morrow with your—with the De Heems, who will escort your lady to the strawberry festival?"

"Now that is a delicate question and one that had quite slipped my memory. Yet, if you will think over our conversation, you will discover

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that I had not said I purposed leaving the country to-morrow. I only said it was my last night under your roof."

"You mean to stay on Marya's account?"

Carolus did not answer, and Judith took this silence for consent and leaped to her feet, eager to be off lest he should read her face.

"I'll run to the Jaspyns and ask her to come over," she said.

"There's no such hot haste," Carolus replied. "You promised that we should see this sun set together. 'T is the last chance in both our lives, belike."

"Why so?" Judith asked startled. "I hope we may be friends when all this is past."

"Judith," Carolus interrupted angrily, "there is one gift I will not take at your hands and that is your friendship. How dare you offer it to me? From the first night I set eyes upon you and read dislike and distrust in your face, I knew that there was no friendship possible between us, and so did you; so why proffer me a hollow sham?"

"Indeed," began Judith at a loss for words. "Indeed—"

"What is my name?" Carolus asked in a gentler

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tone. "For all reward for all I tried to do but failed in, I ask you to call me by it. I have a fancy to hear it for the first time in my memory from your lips."

"Indeed, Charles," Judith spoke with unwonted meekness, "I meant not to affront you. What is it you would have me say?"

"Can you not guess?" Carolus took her hand. "Did you not know that I had to fight two enemies, myself as well as De Heem? I loved you so that it seemed to me, once wed, you must look kindly on me: There at least I played the man, and, had it come to the worst, I think I should have broken my word rather than force you. I love you. Now you know it, and though the sun is not set I give you back your promise. You are free to go."

He dropped his head in his hands, listening for her departing footsteps.

Instead he heard her voice from very near.

"But Charles," she whispered, "why did you let me hate you so long?"

